BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER

DAVID
BAGLEY
DELL
KEITH

BACK IN THE HOOD

MARVEL

BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER

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BACK IN THE HOOD

PETER DAVID
WRITER

MARK BAGLEY
PENCILER

JOHN DELL WITH **ANDREW HENNESSY** (#4)
INKERS

JASON KEITH
COLOR ARTIST

VC's JOE CARAMAGNA
LETTERER

MARK BAGLEY, JOHN DELL & **JASON KEITH** (#1-5) AND **JAMES HARREN** (THE CLONE CONSPIRACY: OMEGA #1)
COVER ART

ALLISON STOCK
ASSISTANT EDITOR

DEVIN LEWIS
EDITOR

NICK LOWE
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

COLLECTION EDITOR: **MARK D. BEAZLEY**
ASSISTANT EDITOR: **CAITLIN O'CONNELL**
ASSOCIATE MANAGING EDITOR: **KATERI WOODY**
SENIOR EDITOR, SPECIAL PROJECTS: **JENNIFER GRÜNWALD**
VP PRODUCTION & SPECIAL PROJECTS: **JEFF YOUNGQUIST**
SVP PRINT, SALES & MARKETING: **DAVID GABRIEL**
BOOK DESIGNER: **ADAM DEL RE**

DIGITAL MANAGER/PRODUCTION: **TIM SMITH 3**
DIGITAL PRODUCTION: **KOU CHEN & RACHEL YOUNG**

EDITOR IN CHIEF: **AXEL ALONSO**
CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER: **JOE QUESADA**
PRESIDENT: **DAN BUCKLEY**
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: **ALAN FINE**

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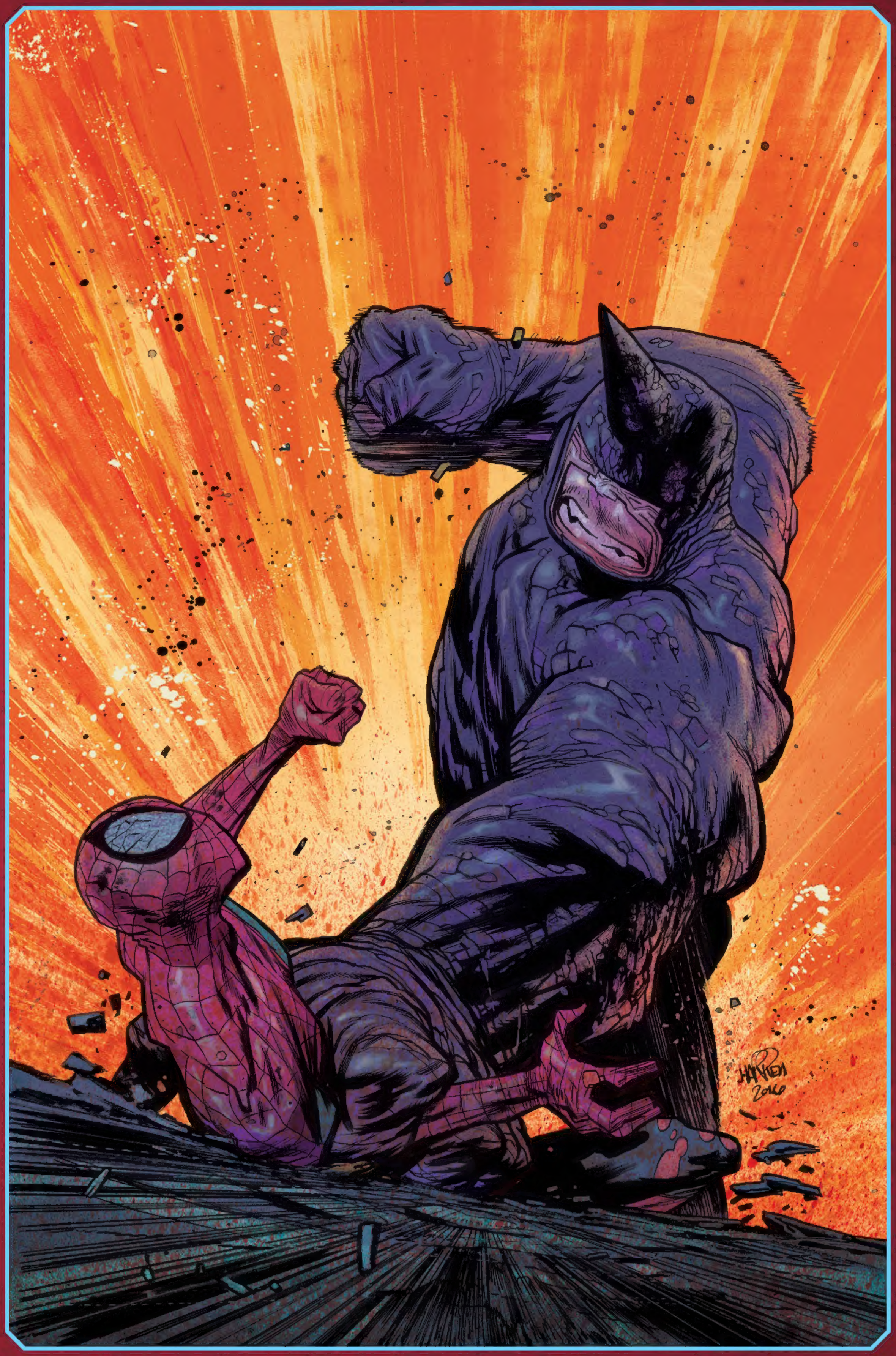
Years ago, Miles Warren, one of Peter Parker's college professors, stole a sample of Peter's genetic material and used it to create a perfect clone of **SPIDER-MAN**. With all of Peter's memories, the clone fled. Created, not born, and without an identity of his own, he gave himself a new name and made his own way in the world as **BEN REILLY: THE SCARLETT SPIDER!**

After seemingly sacrificing himself to save Peter Parker's life, Ben Reilly was resurrected by none other than his creator, **THE JACKAL**, and subjected to dozens of torturous experiments.

The procedures drove him quite mad, and Ben soon broke free. He took the title of the Jackal and all the technology that came with it for himself, and began to resurrect anyone who had lost their lives as a result of Spider-Man's actions (or inactions). With an eye on global influence, Ben built himself a pharmaceutical company, and used his technology to "cure" hundreds of people. In actuality, he had simply swapped his patients with clones, with neither their knowledge nor consent.

Unwilling to let Ben toy with the power to create life, Spider-Man destroyed his entire facility, and Ben himself seemed to be killed in the blast.

Unbeknownst to Spider-Man, however, Ben survived.
Now he just needs to figure out what to do next...



THE CLONE CONSPIRACY: OMEGA #1

GIVE US A WINK

DAVID • BAGLEY • DELL
KEITH • CARAMAGNA

BAR

RITA! THIS IS LATE FOR YOU.

YEAH, WELL...

...I'VE HAD A HELL OF A DAY.

YOU WANNA TALK ABOUT IT?

I HOPE THIS DOESN'T SOUND TOO ARROGANT, BUT I DOUBT YOU'D UNDERSTAND. I'M JUST GOING TO GRAB A TABLE.

SUIT YOURSELF.

HIGH LIFE

THIS SEAT TAKEN?

I'D RATHER BE ALONE RIGHT NOW, THANKS.

YOU SURE, RITA?

YES, I'M...

AND HERE I THOUGHT WE WERE OLD FRIENDS, RITA.

DO I REALLY NEED MY SUIT AND MASK TO BE RECOGNIZED?

J... JACKAL?

CALL ME BEN.

BUT...BUT YOU'RE DEAD. THEY TOLD ME YOU...

DISSOLVED INTO A HEAP OF ASH, LOCKED IN COMBAT WITH THE OCTOPUS?

Y-YES...

RITA, COME ON. THE PLACE WAS FILLED WITH RAPIDLY DECOMPOSING BODIES.

"DOC OCK BROKE MY WEBWARE, SO OUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD SPIDER-MAN'S STABILIZING SIGNAL WASN'T HELPING ME.

"I HAD TO GET OUT OF THERE, FIND SOMEONE WITH A WORKING WEBWARE.

"BUT I COULDN'T JUST LEAVE. IF SPIDEY KNEW I WAS ALIVE, HE'D NEVER STOP LOOKING.

"SO I SWALLOWED ALL THE STABILIZING PILLS I COULD TO BUY SOME TIME.

"I SWAPPED CLOTHES WITH ONE OF THE DEAD CLONES. *HE* DIDN'T NEED THEM.

"AND I LIBERATED ONE OF THE WEBWARE SHEEP OF HIS WATCH AND CAR, AND, VOILA!"

AND NOW YOU'RE HERE. HOW'D YOU KNOW I'D BE HERE--?

IT'S YOUR FAVORITE WATERING HOLE. YOU'LL FIND THERE'S NOT A LOT I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU.

BEN, I...

I THOUGHT WE WERE DOING GOOD WORK. I THOUGHT WE WERE HELPING PEOPLE.

INSTEAD, I'M BEING TREATED LIKE I'M SOME SORT OF...OF SUPER VILLAIN.

NEW U WAS DOING GOOD WORK. WE WERE HELPING PEOPLE--

WE WERE PLAYING GOD!

I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'VE BEEN PAYING ATTENTION, BUT GOD HASN'T BEEN PLAYING GOD FOR A LONG, LONG TIME. NATURE ABHORS A VACUUM. SO WE STEPPED IN.

IT WAS WRONG. WE LIED, WE DECEIVED, WE SCREWED WITH PEOPLES' EMOTIONS, AND IT WAS WRONG. IT WAS INHUMANE.

SO IS GOD. AT LEAST WE'RE CONSISTENT.

I NEED MONEY.

EXCUSE ME?

IT'S HARD TO MAKE A WITHDRAWAL FROM THE BANK WHEN I'M SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD. I'VE GOT NOTHING EXCEPT THE CLOTHES ON MY BACK. I NEED TO GET OUT OF TOWN.

I JUST NEED A LOAN...

MILLER HIGH

BEN, I HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO PAY MY BILLS. MAYBE. I'M NOT RICH.

YOU SURE?

YES, I'M S--

RITA CLARKSON?

YES?

REMEMBER US, DR. CLARKSON?

I CAN'T SAY THAT I--

OH, GOD. MR. D'LANDO.

LEO D'LANDO. THAT'S RIGHT. AND YOUR COMPANY SAVED MY WIFE, NIKKI.

WHO WAS ALSO MY SISTER.

EXCEPT YOU *DIDN'T* SAVE HER, DID YOU?

BUZZ BEER

MILLAR

SAMMY

DR

THAT WASN'T NIKKI AT ALL. IT WAS SOME...*THING.* A COPY. AND IT DISSOLVED, BUBBLING AND HISSING, RIGHT IN THE LIVING ROOM.

OUR PARENTS SAW IT. THE FAMILY DIDN'T APPRECIATE THAT.

COME WITH US, DOCTOR.

NOW LISTEN...

I SWEAR TO GOD, RITA, COME WITH US OR WE'LL DO YOU IN RIGHT HERE IN THE BAR.

H-HOW DID YOU EVEN KNOW I WAS HERE--?

SOURCES. NOW COME WITH US. OR DIE HERE. UP TO YOU.

GET OUT.

YOU DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT IT, FELLA.

OH, YOU'D BE *AMAZED* WHAT I HAVE TO SAY.

UNHHH!

WAAAAM

SAMMY'S

NICE TRY.

BUT IT WAS ONLY A TRY. AND ONE IS ALL YOU GET.

WAIT... THAT...THAT VOICE... YOU'RE...

YOU'RE THE GUY... WHO TOLD US WE'D...

RIGHT.

BUZZ BEER

BLAAAM

URKHHH--!

UNNFFF!

AW, CRAP!

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE. WE'VE GOT TO GET YOU OUT OF HERE--

WHAT'RE YOU TALKING AB--?

JUST GONNA GRAB SOMETHING FIRST.

FIGURES.

WELL, RITA, IT'S BEEN GREAT. I'LL TRY TO STAY IN TOUCH.

WAIT. COME WITH ME.

WHERE?

BANK

PARKING

DR. CLARKSON, YOU REALIZE BY WITHDRAWING YOUR IRA FUNDS NOW, YOU'LL BE TAKING A CONSIDERABLE LOSS IN--

I KNOW AND I DON'T CARE. THIS IS AN EMERGENCY.

YOU SAID YOU KNEW SO MUCH ABOUT ME. GUESS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE MONEY I HAD STASHED AWAY.

ABSOLUTELY I DID. THEN I TOLD THOSE GUYS WHERE TO FIND YOU SO I COULD BEAT THEM UP AND GET YOU TO REWARD ME.

RIGHT, SURE. HA HA.

THIS IS JUST A LOAN.

YOU JUST SAVED MY LIFE. THIS IS *REPAYMENT*.

ALWAYS WANTED TO DO THAT.

WH-WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

I THOUGHT I'D HIT BROADWAY.

SO, YOU'RE HEADING TO NEW YORK?

THERE'S MORE THAN ONE BROADWAY. SO LONG, RITA.

SO LONG... BEN.

BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER™

#1

DAVID
BAGLEY
DELL
KEITH

MARVEL

Years ago, Miles Warren, one of Peter Parker's college professors, stole a sample of Peter's genetic material and used it to create a perfect clone of Spider-Man. With all of Peter's memories, the clone fled. Created, not born, and without an identity of his own, he gave himself a new name and made his own way in the world as...

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The procedures drove him quite mad, and Ben soon broke free. He took the title of the Jackal and all the technology that came with it for himself, and began to resurrect anyone who had lost their lives as a result of Spider-Man's actions (or inactions). With an eye on global influence, Ben built himself a pharmaceutical company, and used his technology to "cure" hundreds of people. In actuality, he had simply swapped his patients with clones, with neither their knowledge nor consent.

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WRITER
PETER DAVID

PENCILER
MARK BAGLEY

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JASON KEITH

LETTERER
VC'S JOE CARAMAGNA

COVER ARTISTS
MARK BAGLEY, JOHN DELL & JASON KEITH

VARIANT COVER ART
GREG LAND & MORRY HOLLOWELL, TOM LYLE & ANDRES MOSSA, JOHN TYLER CHRISTOPHER (ACTION FIGURE), J. SCOTT CAMPBELL & EDGAR DELGADO

ASSISTANT EDITOR
ALLISON STOCK

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
DEVIN LEWIS

EDITOR
NICK LOWE

EDITOR IN CHIEF
AXEL ALONSO

CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER
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SO MANY PEOPLE COME THROUGH HERE TO BEGIN A NEW LIFE. FIND A NEW CHANCE. START EVERYTHING OVER AGAIN.

WHY NOT ME, THEN? WHY NOT *BEN REILLY?*

SHOULDN'T I HAVE THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES AS EVERYBODY ELSE? SHOULDN'T I BE ABLE TO CHANGE MY NAME, BECOME SOMEONE NEW?

LIKE THIS SNAPPY NEW COSTUME. MAN. THIS THING FITS GREAT.

AND THAT COSPLAYER I TOOK IT OFF...HELL, HE WON'T MISS IT. I MEAN, HE MADE UP HIS VERY OWN SPIDER-MAN COSTUME. AND WHAT DID I DO? I MADE IT *OFFICIAL*

I MEAN, YEAH, OKAY, I LEFT HIM LYING NAKED IN A RESTROOM AT THE HOTEL, BUT HELL. I DIDN'T TELL HIM TO GO COMMANDO WHILE WEARING A TIGHT-FITTING COSTUME. WHAT WAS HE, SHOWING OFF?

AT LEAST WEAR A DANCE BELT, DUDE. THERE'S STUFF WE JUST DON'T NEED TO SEE ON A FRIDAY NIGHT.

WOW. YOU CAN REALLY SEE THE WHOLE STRIP FROM HERE.

GOD, I MISS NEW YORK. WHAT DOES IT SAY ABOUT ME WHEN THE CLOSEST I CAN COME TO IT IS THE "NEW YORK, NEW YORK" HOTEL AND CASINO IN *LAS VEGAS?*

OKAY, SO...WHAT NOW? HOW DO I LIVE MY LIFE?

I'VE GOT A CRAPPY ROOM AT A CRAPPY MOTEL AND NOT MUCH MONEY TO MY NAME. PETER THOUGHT HE HAD MONEY PROBLEMS AT THE BEGINNING? AT LEAST HE HAD A HOUSE. LOVING AUNT AND UNCLE.

I'VE GOT NOBODY.

THAT'S NOT TRUE. YOU HAVE ME.

YOU DON'T COUNT.

OF COURSE I COUNT!

ONE... TWO...

YOU'RE HILARIOUS.

AREN'T I, THOUGH?

HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO SULK UP HERE?

I'M NOT SULKING.

SO YOUR PLAN FELL APART. SO WHAT? YOUR PLANS ALWAYS FALL APART BECAUSE YOU'RE THE BAD GUY.

I'M NOT A BAD GUY.

YOU HAD A SCHEME THAT FAILED THANKS TO SPIDER-MAN. KIND OF THINK THAT MAKES YOU THE BAD GUY BY DEFINITION.

SCREW YOU.

NOW YOU'RE USING BAD GUY LANGUAGE.

I WAS BRINGING PEOPLE BACK TO LIFE! HOW DOES THAT MAKE ME A BAD GUY? WHAT RULE WAS I BREAKING?

THE FIRST ONE.

WHAT?

"THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME."

LIFE, DEATH, RESURRECTION... YOU SET YOURSELF UP IN THE BIG MAN'S PLACE. AND HE SENT ONE OF HIS ANGELS TO SMACK YOU DOWN.

YOU'RE IN ESTEEMED COMPANY, THOUGH. REMEMBER LUCIFER?

DUDE, YOU NEED A PLAN.

A ROCKET PACK? REALLY?

I'M IMAGINARY, SO I CAN DO WHATEVER I WANT.

I HAVE A PLAN.

SUUUURE YOU DO.

I DO. I REALLY--

EEEEEEEE!

OH, THANK GOD.

SOMEONE'S IN TROUBLE.

GET AWAY! GET AWAY! OR--!

OR WHAT?

HEY! DO YOU HAVE A COSTUME?

WH-WHAT?!

A COSTUME. YOU KNOW. TIGHTS. OR ARMOR.

OR MAYBE A MORE IMPRESSIVE WEAPON THAN, Y'KNOW, A KNIFE.

I MEAN, YOU'RE THE FIRST BAD GUY I'M FIGHTING IN LAS VEGAS. I'D KIND OF LIKE IT IF YOU HAD SOMETHING MORE THREATEN--

THEEEERE WE GO! NOW WE'RE TALKING!

GET OUTTA HERE, SPIDER-MAN!

NOT SPIDER-MAN. THE SCARLET SPIDER.

NO REGERTS

BLAAAM

DON'T CALL ME "SPIDER-MAN" AGAIN.

BECAUSE IF YOU DO...

...IT WON'T GO WELL FOR YOU.

WUNK

Unhhh...

WOW. PRETTY GOOD GUN.

NICE HEFT.

WHERE'D YOU GET IT?

BLAAM BLAAM

EEEEYARRRHHH!

PUT IT DOWN. I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T USE GUNS. YOU'RE SPIDER-M...

I WARNED HIM. CAN'T SAY I DIDN'T WARN HIM.

YOU HEARD ME WARN HIM, RIGHT?

Y-YES...

WELL, THERE Y'GO.

KNOW WHAT THEY NEED IN HERE? A SLOT MACHINE.

IT'S VEGAS. YOU SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO GO 20 FEET WITHOUT SEEING A SLOT MACHINE, RIGHT?

THAT'S... YES.

SEE, I KNEW I LIKED YOU. YOUR NAME WOULDN'T BE MARY JANE, WOULD IT? OR GWEN?

MANDY.

HEY, MANDY. NAME'S BEN. BUT KEEP THAT TO YOURSELF.

I...I REALLY DON'T KNOW HOW TO THANK YOU. HOW I CAN REPAY YOU...?

A HUNDRED BUCKS.

I'M SORRY?

GIVE ME A HUNDRED BUCKS, WE'LL CALL IT SQUARE.

I ONLY HAVE 50. I'M OUT OF WORK AND MONEY'S SO TIGHT.

IF I CAN GET A JOB, I CAN REPAY YOU...

OKAY. WE'LL DO IT THAT WAY.

AND MANDY...

IF YOU TRY TO BACK OUT OF THE DEAL...IF YOU TRY TO STIFF ME...

IT WON'T GO WELL FOR YOU.

MANDY?

Yes...?

TAKE THE GUN.

WHAT?!

THERE YA GO! NICE HEFT, RIGHT?

I...I'VE NEVER HELD A GUN.

WELL, YOU JUST GOT MUGGED, SO KEEP IT IN YOUR PURSE. AFTER ALL...

O... OKAY.

...YOU NEVER KNOW WHO YOU'RE GOING TO RUN INTO.

UHHH...

...THANKS?

SAN FRANCISCO.

NOW WHERE THE HELL ARE MY KEYS? I SWEAR TO GOD, RITA...

...YOU'D LOSE YOUR DAMNED HEAD IF IT WEREN'T SCREWED...

...ON...?

OH...MY GOD.

GOOD TO SEE YOU, RITA. LIKE WHAT YOU'VE DONE WITH YOUR HAIR.

JACKAL!

MISS ME?

OF *COURSE* I'VE MISSED YOU!

WHEN YOU SAID YOU WERE GOING AWAY, I THOUGHT I'D NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN!

REALLY. AND WHERE DID I TELL YOU I WAS GOING?

WHAT? WHAT KIND OF ODD QUESTION IS TH--?

HOLD IT. WHAT'S...?

YOUR SCARS...THEY'VE *CHANGED.* BUT THAT'S IMPOSS...

YOU'RE NOT THE JACKAL! YOU'RE--

KAINE. THAT'S RIGHT.

THANKS FOR CONFIRMING FOR ME WHAT I SUSPECTED. HE'S ALIVE. NOW...

...TELL ME *WHERE* HE *IS.*

GO TO HELL.

ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, YOU'RE *GOING* TO TELL ME.

HAH. YOU'RE A *SUPER HERO.* I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU TRY.

I'M NOT.

AND YOU WON'T.

LAS VEGAS.

NICE TO KNOW YOU STILL REMEMBER ME.

OH, I'LL NEVER FORGET YOU. TRUST ME.

YOU'RE NOT ASHAMED OF WHAT WE DID, I HOPE.

I DID WHAT I THOUGHT WAS *RIGHT*.

MAYBE IT WASN'T.

NOW YOU'RE JUST BEING RIDICULOUS. COME ON. GO SEE HER.

SHE'S WHY YOU CAME TO VEGAS IN THE FIRST PLACE.

WHAT--?!

WHAT THE HELL!

THAT'S REALLY WHY EVERYONE DOES ANYTHING, FROM DRIVING TOO FAST TO CHEATING ON YOUR LOVER.

IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME.

YOU THINK YOU WALK AWAY FROM ME THAT EASY? YOU THINK JUST BY DESTROYING THAT MASK, YOU CAN DESTROY THE JACKAL?

IT'S NOT *THAT* EASY, BEN. NOT THAT EASY BY A LONG--

How... could you...?

SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME.

SCHMUCK.

THERE IT IS: *MERCURY RISING.*

ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR CASINOS AND HOTELS ON THE STRIP.

IF I HAD ALL THE MONEY IN THE WORLD, I WOULD DEFINITELY SET UP A PLACE LIKE THIS.

AND I WOULD TOTALLY HAVE *THAT* LOOMING OVER THE LOBBY.

WELL, A STATUE OF *ME*. NOT OF *HER*.

CASSANDRA MERCURY. ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL WOMEN IN THE WORLD. RIGHT UP THERE WITH...

WELL, SHE'S NOT POWERFUL LIKE CAPTAIN MARVEL. OR STORM.

OR ANYONE ELSE WHO WAS BORN INTO IT OR HAD A HAPPY ACCIDENT TO TRANSFORM THEM.

NO, I GUESS SHE'S MORE OF A "SELF-MADE" POWERFUL.

WHICH DOESN'T MAKE HER ANY LESS DANGEROUS. IN FACT, IN SOME RESPECTS, SHE'S *MORE* SO.

HOW DID YOU FIND THAT OUT? NO ONE KNOWS ABOUT THAT!

I MAKE IT MY BUSINESS TO KNOW ABOUT PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING, GENERAL.

WH-WHAT DO YOU WANT?

AT THE MOMENT? NOTHING.

NOTHING? BUT...AREN'T YOU BLACKMAILING ME?

GOOD HEAVENS, NO. I'M SIMPLY INFORMING YOU THAT I KNOW.

AND IN THE FUTURE, SHOULD WE CROSS PATHS, I WANT YOU TO *REMEMBER* THAT.

THAT'S CLEAR, ISN'T IT?

Y...YES.

PHONE CALL GO OKAY, MS. MERCURY?

SUCH A *SWEET* MAN, ONCE YOU GET TO KNOW HIM.

HOW'S THE GAMING FLOOR?

I'M HEADED DOWN THERE SHORTLY. FIGURED I'D STOP BY FIRST.

CHECKING IN ON ME? YOU'VE BEEN SO SWEET SINCE ABIGAIL PASSED, SLATE, BUT YOUR CONCERN IS UNNECESSARY.

NOW, GET DOWN THERE AND KEEP MY MONEY SAFE.

YOU GOT IT.

IMPRESSIVE PLACE. TONS OF PEOPLE STUFFING MONEY INTO THE POCKETS OF THE HOUSE.

HOW DO THEY NOT UNDERSTAND THAT THEY'LL NEVER--

THAT'S ENOUGH, JUNE.

JUNE?

NOT "MAY," BUT...IT'S CLOSE.

AND, OH JEEZ, LOOK AT HER.

JUNE, THIS IS INSANE! DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG IT TOOK ME TO FIND YOU HERE?

YOU HAVE TO STOP THIS! YOU HAVE TO COME HOME!

JUNE!

THAT'S ENOUGH. LET HER GO.

WHAT--?

I'M HER *HUSBAND!*

WHO THE HELL ARE *YOU?!*

YOU MEAN YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE ME?

I'M HER *NEPHEW.*

THAT'S INSANE! SHE'S AN ONLY CHILD!
LIVE WITH IT.
LIVE WITH--?
FINE! I'M DONE WITH HER!
YOU WANT HER? YOU'VE GOT HER!
I'M DEAD TO HER!
YOU HEAR THAT, JUNE? I'M DEAD TO YOU!
YOUR NAME WOULDN'T BE "BEN," WOULD IT?
NO!
WELL, OKAY. NOT BEN, BUT HE'S DEAD, SO CLOSE ENOUGH.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT HIM, AUNT JUNE. I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU.
CAN I GET YOU ANYTHING, AUNT JUNE?
NOBODY MOVE!
OH, ARE YOU KIDDING ME?
SHUT UP.

I SAID...

...NOBODY MOVE!

OTHER PEOPLE WALK INTO A CASINO, AND THEY GAMBLE. HAVE A GOOD TIME.

THAT'S GOOD! MAKE LIKE STATUES!

WE'RE GONNA SAVE YOU ALL SOME TIME, PEOPLE! YOU WANT TO GET RID OF YOUR MONEY? YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE IT ALL TO US! RIGHT NOW!

ME, I WALK IN AND MINUTES LATER, GUYS SHOW UP LOOKING TO PULL A HEIST.

IT'S LIKE HOW IN THE OLD DAYS I COULDN'T SWING BY A BANK WITHOUT A ROBBERY GOING OFF.

DON'T WORRY, AUNT JUNE. IT'S ALL GONNA BE OKAY.

AUNT JUNE?

SHUT UP.

SO WHAT DO I DO NOW?

STOP THEM, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!

LET THEM GO ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS. THEY'RE NOT--

GET OUT. BOTH OF YOU.

FINE. YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN FROM NOW ON.

RIGHT. SCREW YOU.

WHOEVER THESE GUYS ARE, THEY'RE NOT HURTING ANYONE. JUST WAVING GUNS.

IF I ENGAGE AND BULLETS START FLYING, THERE COULD BE PROBLEMS.

MAYBE IT'S BEST IF I JUST IGNORE TH--

YOUR WALLET.

I DON'T HAVE ONE.

FINE, WHATEVER. COME ON, OLD LADY.

DUDE, ARE YOU KIDDING? LOOK AT HER!

FINE.

NO! MINE!

BE QUIET! I SAID BE--

NO!

KRAAAK

EEEYAARRRHH!

NO ONE THREATENS AUNT JUNE.

YOU OKAY, AUNT JUNE?

GET OUT OF THE WAY! YOU'RE STANDING ON MY QUARTERS!

TAPAS BAR

KILL HIM!

ON IT!

NOT A LOT OF OPTIONS HERE.

I START BOUNCING AROUND OR WEBBING, EVERYONE'S GONNA THINK I'M SPIDER-MAN.

AND ONCE WORD GETS TO PETER, HE'S GONNA KNOW THAT HE WASN'T HERE. WHICH WILL MAKE HIM WONDER WHO IT IS.

WHICH MEANS I AM ONCE AGAIN BONED.

BUDDA BUDDA

BUDDA BUDDA

DOWN!

HUH?

BUDDA BUDDA

BUDDA BUDDA

I'LL BE DAMNED

WHAT THE HELL--?!

QUICK! GRENADES!

NOT QUICK ENOUGH.

HOLY CRAP. WHO THE HELL IS *THAT* GUY?!

IT'S ALL OVER, FOLKS. POLICE ARE ON THEIR WAY.

NICE TRICK. CARE TO TELL ME HOW YOU DID IT?

MIRRORS.

I SUSPECT MY BOSS WOULD LIKE TO KNOW.

AND YOUR BOSS IS...?

HER NAME'S ON THIS BUILDING.

BY ALL MEANS, THEN.

WILL YOU BE OKAY HERE, AUNT JUNE?

HM.

OKAY, THEN.

I CAN'T FEEL MY ARM.

SHUT UP.

SO WHAT HAVE WE HERE?

PLEASE, TAKE OFF YOUR JACKET AND SUNGLASSES. MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME.

ACTUALLY, I'M GOING TO LEAVE THEM ON, IF THAT'S OKAY.

THAT VOICE. I ***KNOW*** YOU.

YOU'RE ***THE JACKAL.***

NOT REALLY GOING BY THAT NAME ANYMORE. YOU CAN CALL ME...

PETER.

AND I NEED YOUR HELP.

WHY IN GOD'S NAME SHOULD I HELP YOU?

FOR STARTERS, I HEALED YOUR DAUGHTER.

MY ABIGAIL IS DEAD. THAT... THAT ***THING*** YOU REPLACED HER WITH ***WASN'T*** HER.

IT FOOLED ME AT FIRST, BUT WHEN IT...

MY GOD, IT PAINS ME TO EVEN THINK OF IT.

I'VE BEEN PRAYING FOR THE CHANCE TO KILL THE MAN WHO INFLICTED THAT TORTURE ON MY DAUGHTER, AND HERE YOU ARE.

OH YEAH.

THIS IS GOING ***GREAT***

TO BE CONTINUED!

SCARLET LETTERS

Send e-mail to SPIDEYOFFICE@MARVEL.COM (please mark as OKAY TO PRINT)
Letters c/o Spider-Office 135 West 50th Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10020

ALLISON STOCK
ASSISTANT EDITOR

DEVIN LEWIS
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

NICK LOWE
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

AXEL ALONSO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

JOE QUESADA
CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER

DAN BUCKLEY
PRESIDENT

ALAN FINE
EXEC. PRODUCER

BEN REILLY IS BACK IN THE HOOD!

Hello, Spider-Philes! Spider-Office Associate Editor and known Ben Reilly maniac Devin Lewis reporting to you live and in print from Marvel Comics in the heart of New York!

As I write this, it's the first real day of spring here in the Big Apple, and it somehow seems fitting to be working on the first issue of BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER. Spring is a time for rebirth, and who deserves a shot at reinvention more than Ben Reilly? If there's a more deserving character in the Spider-Family, I can't think of 'im.

And what better writer to shepherd Ben into this new era than veteran Spider-Scribe Peter David? Devoted Spidey fans will recognize Peter's name from, well, a BUNCH of terrific Marvel comics from over the years, but most recently he took a turn revisiting the life and times of Miguel O'Hara, your favorite time-displaced wall-crawling web-slinger, in the ongoing SPIDER-MAN 2099 series. If you call yourself a Spidey-fan and you ain't reading it, you're missing out!

And how about Mark Bagley on penciling duties for this puppy? Mark's a legend in comics, and it's books like this that show you exactly why! To start with, there aren't many artists in the biz who can stage and draw an action scene like Mark. You want big, bombastic super hero action, with explosions and a guy in a skintight hooded leotard? Mark's your man! And, maybe most important, Mark's characters are just so darn CHARMING. Of course, it's always a big help when you're working off of great scripts like the ones Peter's been sending our way!

Speaking of scripts--the story Peter and Mark are cooking up for all you fans out there in Mighty Marveldom is something really special. It's chock-full of familiar faces, a few fan-favorite big-league Spidey villains, and even some new characters who'll be making their debuts in the pages of this very funny book! Just like this issue, the whole story Peter and Mark are crafting together will have something for everybody, and it'll feel right at home with the rest of your Spidey books each and every week! Peter's just submitted the script for our FIFTH issue and Mark is about to wrap up the penciling on #4!

And if you're a fan of a certain blue hoodie, keep your eyes peeled. I think you'll like what we've got up our sleeve!

All right--that's it for me! That spring day is still springing along, so I'm gonna go make the most of it. But while I'm gone, why not feast your eyes on the cover to our next issueon sale in one month! While you wait, you should try and hunt down this terrific variant cover by John Tyler Christopher! Look! It's The Scarlet Spider as a little action figure -- and what's that he's wearing? Over and out!

Over and out!
Devin
@edevinlewis

MARVEL

BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER®

#2

DAVID
BAGLEY
DELL
KEITH

DIRECT EDITION NOT FOR SALE IN COMIC STORES

Cloned from a stolen sample of Peter Parker's genetic material, Ben Reilly possesses all of Peter's memories, as well as the powers of The Amazing Spider-Man. Created, not born, and without an identity of his own, he gave himself a new name and made his own way in the world as...

BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER

After a misguided turn as a super villain, Ben is looking to get back on his feet. But things haven't been easy for him.

With no resources, he went to Las Vegas and asked for help from the mother of one of his NEW U patients, Cassandra Mercury, a singer and casino magnate.

She was hardly happy to see him...

WRITER
PETER DAVID

PENCILER
MARK BAGLEY

INKER
JOHN DELL

COLOR ARTIST
JASON KEITH

LETTERER
VC'S JOE CARAMAGNA

COVER ARTISTS
MARK BAGLEY, JOHN DELL & JASON KEITH

VARIANT COVER ARTIST
PATRICK BROWN

ASSISTANT EDITOR
ALLISON STOCK

EDITOR
DEVIN LEWIS

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
NICK LOWE

EDITOR IN CHIEF
AXEL ALONSO

CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER
JOE QUESADA

PRESIDENT
DAN BUCKLEY

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
ALAN FINE

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I HOPE THIS DOESN'T DISAPPOINT YOU, CASS, BUT THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME I'VE HAD A GUN POINTED AT ME.

I'M SURE IT'S NOT. BUT YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS?

WHAT?

THE *LAST* TIME.

BLAAM

NICE SHOT.

HOW DID YOU--?!

PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS AIMING GUNS AT ME. IT NEVER WORKS OUT WELL FOR THEM.

NOW... WE NEED TO HAVE A TALK.

BIG GUY: I KNOW BETTER THAN TO TRY AND SHOOT YOU. YOU HAVE THE WHOLE "BULLETS BOUNCE OFF ME" THING GOING FOR YOU.

BUT *SHE* DOESN'T. SO IF YOU WANT ME TO VENTILATE HER, BY ALL MEANS, KEEP MOVING.

THERRRRRE WE GO.

NOW...LET'S ALL TALK LIKE GROWN-UPS.

FIRST THINGS FIRST: YOU SAID ABIGAIL WAS DEAD.

CROOKS' DISEASE MAY BE FATAL, BUT IT ISN'T FATAL THAT FAST. SHE SHOULDN'T HAVE PASSED YET.

WHY DID YOU LIE?

SHE'S NOT DEAD, BUT SHE MIGHT AS WELL BE. SHE'S LAPSED INTO A COMA AND THE DOCTORS SAY SHE WON'T RECOVER.

IS SHE IN A HOSPITAL?

THEY CAN'T DO ANYTHING FOR HER. SHE'S HERE.

TAKE ME TO HER.

WHY?

BECAUSE I SAID PLEASE.

NO, YOU DIDN'T.

FINE. *PLEASE.*

GIVE ME BACK THE GUN.

SURE. NO PROBLEM.

KRUNK

HERE YOU GO.

MEANWHILE... IN SAN FRANCISCO

I DON'T UNDERSTAND! WHY DID YOU BRING ME HERE?!

STAN WABEE

BECAUSE YOU *LIED* TO ME. YOU SAID THE JACKAL DIDN'T TELL YOU WHERE HE WENT.

HE DIDN'T!

YEAH, SEE, HERE'S THE PROBLEM.

YOU'RE THE ONLY FRIEND HE HAD IN THIS TOWN, RITA.

EVERYONE ELSE THE COPS SNATCHED UP ROLLED ON HIM. BUT NOT *YOU.*

I'D LIKE TO KNOW *WHY.*

AND IF YOU WON'T TELL THE TRUTH, WELL...

...I'LL JUST HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO *FORCE* YOU.

YOU'RE... YOU'RE GOING TO TORTURE ME?!

OF COURSE NOT.

IT'S CALLED "*ENHANCED INTERROGATION*" NOW.

OF COURSE, THE WATER THEY USUALLY USE FOR THIS IS *COLD*.

BUT I THOUGHT I WOULD TRY BOILING IT. NOT ONLY WILL IT HURT, BUT IT WILL ALSO *SEVERELY* BURN YOUR FACE.

UNFORTUNATELY I'M THE LAST PERSON TO FEEL SYMPATHETIC ABOUT THAT.

PLEASE... NO...

THEY SAY IT FEELS LIKE YOU'RE DROWNING. I WONDER WHAT KIND OF EFFECT THE EXTREME HEAT WILL HAVE ON THAT.

YOU MIGHT BE *HURTING* TOO MUCH TO EVEN WORRY ABOUT BREATHING. HARD TO SAY.

LAST CHANCE, RITA.

YOU CAN'T!

OH, I PRETTY MUCH THINK I CAN.

HERE. AT LEAST YOU WON'T *HEAR* THE STEAMING WATER POURING OVER YOUR FACE.

JUST TRYING TO HELP.

GET READY, RITA.

BECAUSE THIS IS *REALLY* GOING TO HURT.

WAIT!

OKAY! OKAY! I SAW HIM! I HELPED HIM!

AFTER SPIDER-MAN DESTROYED HIS EQUIPMENT--HE CAME TO ME IN A BAR! I GAVE HIM MONEY.

WHY?

BECAUSE HE *ASKED* ME FOR IT! YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT HIM--HE SAVED MY LIFE! THERE WERE TWO MEN WHO WANTED TO KILL ME AND *HE* STOPPED THEM!

AT THE *BAR?*

YES!

THEY JUST *HAPPENED* TO SHOW UP A FEW MINUTES AFTER HE DID?

RITA. HE PROBABLY *ARRANGED* THAT. HE SET YOU UP.

YOU'RE WRONG. HE'D NEVER DO THAT!

YES. HE WOULD.

WHAT ELSE DID HE SAY?

I THOUGHT I'D HIT BROADWAY.

"HE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT GOING TO BROADWAY. BUT *NOT* THE ONE IN NEW YORK."

HE'S ON THE *RUN.*

JUST TWO MORE QUESTIONS, RITA:

WHAT FLOOR WAS YOUR OFFICE AT *NEW U* ON, AND WHAT WAS YOUR PASSWORD?

WHY DO YOU WANT TO KNOW THAT?

THAT'S *MY* BUSINESS. ANSWER MY QUESTIONS, RITA. BECAUSE OTHERWISE WE CAN JUST--

NINTH FLOOR. NORTHWEST CORNER.

MY PASSWORD WAS "ARISTOTLE."

ARISTOTLE?

HE WAS THE FIRST BIOLOGIST. HE CLASSIFIED ALL LIVING THINGS.

I *KNOW* WHO ARISTOTLE IS.

WELL, YOU DON'T KNOW ***BEN!***

TOLD YOU HIS NAME, HUH?

HE WOULD NEVER ***USE*** ME THE WAY YOU DESCRIBED!

HE'S A BAD MAN. REGARDLESS OF THE LIVES YOU SAVED TOGETHER.

YOU WERE GOING TO DUMP ***BOILING WATER*** ON MY FACE! YOU DON'T GET TO ACCUSE ANYONE ***ELSE*** OF BEING A ***BAD MAN!***

THAT WOULD ***SEEM*** TO BE A VALID OBSERVATION.

THERE'S... WHAT?

NEVER HEARD OF DRY ICE? AND YOU CALL YOURSELF A SCIENTIST.

I'LL BE BACK TO FREE YOU AFTER I PAY YOUR OFFICE A VISIT, RITA. LET'S JUST HOPE YOU DIDN'T LIE TO ME...

...OR IT WON'T GO WELL.

YOU...YOU SAID THERE WAS BOILING WATER...

LAS VEGAS.

ALL RIGHT. SO THIS IS GOING WELL.

AT LEAST I FOUGHT MY FIRST IMPULSE TO JUST RIP THIS LADY'S ARM OFF HER SHOULDER RATHER THAN SIMPLY DODGING THAT BULLET.

OTHERWISE, WE'D BE DEALING WITH HER ON THE GROUND AND BLOOD EVERYWHERE WHO NEEDS THAT?

THAT ISN'T TO SAY THIS STILL WON'T TURN INTO A MAJOR SLUGFEST.

WONDER WHAT THIS GUY'S DEAL IS?

SO WHAT'S YOUR DEAL?

COOL.

YEAH, THAT WORKED.

DING

AFTER YOU, PETER.

WH--?

OH. RIGHT. TOLD HER MY NAME WAS PETER.

I CRACK MYSELF UP SOMETIMES.

EVENING, MISS MERCURY.

EVENING, KURT. ANY CHANGE?

IF THERE WERE, WE'D HAVE CALLED YOU IMMEDIATELY, MA'AM.

YES, OF COURSE. TAKE A BREAK, KURT, WE'LL BE FINE.

IN HERE, PETER.

I WONDER HOW SHE'S GOING TO TRY TO KILL ME NO-

YOU KNOW, I'D LOVE TO TAKE ALL THE PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE IN GOD AND ASK THEM WHY AN ALMIGHTY BEING WOULD DO THIS TO A CHILD.

I KNOW THEY'LL GIVE ALL THE USUAL ANSWERS. THERE'S A PLAN. THERE'S A REASON FOR EVERYTHING. IT'S GOD'S WILL.

EXCEPT I KNOW THERE'S NOT. I'VE DIED A COUPLE DOZEN TIMES AND THERE WAS ONLY EVER BLACKNESS AND NOTHINGNESS.

I SOMEHOW DOUBT, THOUGH, THAT SHARING MY INSIGHT INTO THE SITUATION WOULD HELP MATTERS.

WHAT? NOTHING TO SAY? OR ARE YOU ADMIRING YOUR *HANDIWORK?*

I WANTED MY LITTLE GIRL BACK AND YOU PROMISED THAT YOUR COMPANY COULD DO IT.

AND INSTEAD YOU SUBSTITUTED SOME...SOME CREATURE. SOME *COPY* OF HER.

I WAS SINGING GOOD NIGHT TO HER WHEN SHE COLLAPSED.

I HELD MY LITTLE GIRL IN MY ARMS AS HER SKIN AND BONES DISSOLVED.

IMAGINE MY SURPRISE WHEN THE POLICE BROUGHT HER BACK TO ME. LIKE THIS. FROM SAN FRANCISCO OF ALL PLACES.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS TO YOU. IF IT WAS A JOKE OR A SCAM.

WHAT I *DO* KNOW IS THAT THE DOCTORS ARE TELLING ME THE SAME THING THEY DID AFTER SHE WAS DIAGNOSED.

MY LITTLE ABBY WILL NEVER WAKE UP AGAIN.

SHE IS JUST GOING TO *LIE HERE* UNTIL HER BODY GIVES OUT. THAT'S ALL I HAVE TO LOOK FORWARD TO.

MY LITTLE GIRL'S DEATH WILL BE A BLESSING.

AND SO WILL YOURS.

Mommy...?

Can I have some water?

SL-SLATE...

RIGHT. WATER. GOT IT.

HEY, HONEY. HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

I'M TIRED.

THAT'S... THAT'S UNDERSTANDABLE. BUT YOU'RE AWAKE, AND THAT'S... GOOD. THAT'S *VERY* GOOD.

IF IT'S GOOD WHY ARE YOU CRYING?

BECAUSE I'M HAPPY.

I THOUGHT YOU ONLY CRY IF YOU'RE SAD.

SOMETIMES YOU CRY WHEN YOU'RE HAPPY, TOO.

THANK YOU, SLATE. TAKE PETER OUTSIDE, PLEASE.

RIGHT, DIVA.

UNFFFF!

WHAT DID YOU DO?

YOU WANNA GO?

FINE. LET'S GO.

HIS SKIN IS BULLET-PROOF...

WAA

AAP

...BUT I'M BETTING HIS *EARS* AREN'T! A NICE CRACK ON EITHER SIDE OF HIS SKULL SHOULD--

--DOOOO NOTHING, APPARENTLY.

HM.

THAT WAS ANNOYING.

WAAM

OOOOFFF!

HE HITS TWICE AS HARD AS SPIDER-MAN! CAN'T BREATHE--

WUUUNK

UNHH!

PUNT!

HE'S FAST TOO...

...WORLD'S SPINNING...

NOW HOW ABOUT YOU ANSWER MY QUESTION...

...OR I JUST BLOW YOUR BRAINS OUT THE BACK OF YOUR--

I HAVE A *BETTER* IDEA.

UNLESS *YOUR BRAINS* ARE ALSO BULLETPROOF, WHICH I'M BETTING THEY'RE *NOT*...

...HOW ABOUT WE PUT *DOWN* OUR GUNS AND STOP FIGHTING? LET'S BE *SMILING* WHEN CASSANDRA COMES OUT, SO AS NOT TO RUIN HER DAY.

EVERYTHING OKAY OUT HERE?

YEAH.

GREAT.

COULDN'T BE BETTER.

KURT, SHE'S AWAKE. ALERT DOCTOR RYDER IMMEDIATELY.

YES, MA'AM.

PETER, COME WITH ME.

SO. HOW DID YOU DO IT?

YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE ME IF I TOLD YOU.

WHY DON'T YOU *TELL* ME AND LET ME BE THE JUDGE OF THAT.

TELEPATHY.

I CAN REACH INTO THE MINDS OF CHILDREN. I TOUCHED HER BRAIN AND WOKE HER UP.

THAT'S RIDICULOUS.

DIVA, THIS IS--

QUIET, SLATE.

IS SHE BUYING IT? TELL ME SHE'S BUYING IT.

I HATE TO SAY IT, BUT MY LIE MAKES WAY MORE SENSE THAN THE TRUTH... THE TRUTH BEING THAT I DIDN'T DO A THING.

SHE JUST HAPPENED TO WAKE UP WHEN I HELD HER HAND. IT WAS A COMPLETE COINCIDENCE. BUT I'LL BE DAMNED IF I TELL HER THAT.

CAN YOU CURE HER?

NO. CROOKS DISEASE IS INCURABLE.

ABSOLUTELY.

HOW?

NO CLUE.

RESEARCH. RESEARCH... AND SOME NEW EQUIPMENT.

EQUIPMENT?

MONEY, FOR STARTERS. GUY'S GOTTA EAT.

PLUS A FEW OTHER THINGS.

LIKE WHAT?

MA'AM, YOU CAN'T KEEP SITTING IN FRONT OF THIS SLOT MACHINE.

SHUT UP. GO AWAY.

YOU DON'T HAVE ANY MORE QUARTERS.

I'LL GET SOME.

MA'AM, WE'RE GETTING COMPLAINTS ABOUT Y--

LET GO! SHUT UP!

MA'AM, PLEASE DON'T MAKE THIS--

AARRRHH!

YOU OKAY?

JEEZ! WHAT IF SHE HAS RABIES?

YOU CRAZY OLD BAT! WE'LL CALL THE COPS AND THEY CAN HAUL YOU OUT OF--

OKAY, BOYS. I'LL HANDLE IT FROM HERE.

I SAID TAKE OFF. I HAVE THIS UNDER CONTROL.

GET THAT HAND TAKEN CARE OF.

YES, SIR, MR. SLATE.

YOU'RE JUNE, RIGHT?

LOOK AT ME, MA'AM.

I SAID LOOK AT ME, OR I'LL RIP YOUR HEAD OFF AND NO ONE AROUND HERE WILL CARE.

YEAH. I'M JUNE.

HERE.

IF YOU RUN OUT, GO TO THE CASHIER AND IDENTIFY YOURSELF. YOU'LL GET MORE.

WHAT'S THIS?

YOUR ROOM KEY. ROOM 1100.

YOU'RE LIVING THERE NOW. ANY EXPENSES, CHARGE IT TO THE ROOM.

WHY?

YOUR *NEPHEW.*

25 CENTS

FINE. WHATEVER.

WOULD BE NICE TO HAVE *HUMMINGBIRD'S* HELP GETTING UP TO THE NINTH FLOOR, BUT BEN'S TOO DANGEROUS TO RISK GETTING HER INVOLVED.

SEVEN... EIGHT...

NINE.

KRAAASH

HOPE NOBODY HEARD THAT.

THEN AGAIN, IT'S ONE IN THE MORNING, SO THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANYONE AROUND.

GOTTA MOVE QUICK. COPS DON'T USUALLY LIKE MASKED VIGILANTES WALKING AROUND THEIR *CRIME SCENES.*

GET IN, GET OUT.

DR RITA JOHNSON

BINGO.

GOTTA BE A DATABASE OF PATIENTS SOMEWHERE IN THESE FILES.

BEN ASKED RITA FOR *MONEY.* HE'S GOTTA BE LOOKING FOR MORE.

MAYBE IF I SORT THE LIST BY THE AMOUNT NEW U *CHARGED* FOR THEIR TREATMENTS, STARTING WITH THE HIGHEST...

NEW YORK	$1,175,
NEW YORK	$1,030,
S ANGELES	$1,030,
FRANCISCO	$1,010,
LAS VEGAS	$1,000,
FRANCISCO	$947,2
FRANCISCO	$929,1
CHICAGO	$902,1
BOSTON	$897,0
S ANGELES	$895,8
CHICAGO	$864,2
NEW YORK	$843,1
NEW YORK	$842,3
S AN	$835,1
	8,6

CLARKSON SAID BEN WAS GOING TO BROADWAY, BUT NOT THE ONE IN NEW YORK.

HUNH. VEGAS.

LOT OF MONEY THERE. PLENTY OF SHOWS, TOO. AND ONLY *ONE* NEW U PATIENT.

ABIGAIL MERCURY. HER MOTHER RUNS A CASINO.

CROOKS' DISEASE. DEGENERATIVE GENETIC ILLNESS. STARTS WITH RASHES, THEN THE SKIN STARTS SLOUGHING OFF...

FEVERS, MUSCULAR ATROPHY, COMA AND FINALLY DEATH. PATIENTS RARELY MAKE IT PAST THE AGE OF TEN.

MOTHER'S RICH. MAYBE BEN IS PLANNING TO TRY AND BILK HER. COULD BE HE--

KLICK-ICK!

UH-OH.

BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
YEAH. THIS DAY'S GOING *REAL* WELL.
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
TO BE CONTINUED!

NEXT:

BACK in BLUE!

LET US KNOW HOW WE'RE DOING! DROP US A LINE AT SPIDEYOFFICE@MARVEL.COM!
BE SURE TO MARK IT OKAY TO PRINT!

MARVEL

#3

DAVID
BAGLEY
DELL
KEITH

BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER®

BAGLEY
HENNESSY
JASON!

Years ago, Miles Warren, one of Peter Parker's college professors, stole a sample of Peter's genetic material and used it to create a perfect clone of Spider-Man. With all of Peter's memories, the clone fled. Created, not born, and without an identity of his own, he gave himself a new name and made his own way in the world as...

BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER

After a misguided turn as a super villain, Ben is trying to get back on his feet. But things haven't been easy for him. With no resources, he went to Las Vegas in an attempt to make a new start, but he was soon confronted by Cassandra Mercury, master blackmailer and casino magnate, for failing to save her daughter from a deadly and incurable disease. Cassandra ultimately gave Ben another chance, offering him resources and promising to spare his life if he could find a cure this time.

Meanwhile, Kaine Parker, another clone of Peter Parker, caught up with Ben's old research partner Dr. Rita Clarkson, threatening her in exchange for information about Ben.

WRITER
PETER DAVID

PENCILER
MARK BAGLEY

INKER
JOHN DELL

COLOR ARTISTS
JASON KEITH & JAY DAVID RAMOS

LETTERER
VC'S JOE CARAMAGNA

COVER ARTISTS
MARK BAGLEY, JOHN DELL & JASON KEITH

ASSISTANT EDITOR
ALLISON STOCK

EDITOR
DEVIN LEWIS

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
NICK LOWE

EDITOR IN CHIEF
AXEL ALONSO

CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER
JOE QUESADA

PRESIDENT
DAN BUCKLEY

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
ALAN FINE

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RITA

SLIDE TO ANSWER

OH. WONDERFUL. THIS DOESN'T BODE WELL.

SHOULD I JUST LET IT GO TO VOICE MAIL OR--?

EXCUSE ME. GOTTA TAKE THIS.

MIND IF I STEP OUTSIDE?

BY ALL MEANS.

RITA, YOU AREN'T SUPPOSED TO USE THIS NUMBER EXCEPT IN CASE OF EMERGEN--

WHOA, SLOW DOWN! *WHAT* HAPPENED?!

KAINE *KIDNAPPED* YOU? A *WAREHOUSE*? AND YOU TOLD HIM--?

EVERYTHING. OR WHAT LITTLE I KNEW. I'M SO SORRY. I *HAD* TO.

NO, I'M STILL AT THE WAREHOUSE. SOME HOMELESS GUY--

NAME'S ARTIE.

ARTIE FREED ME. HE LIVES HERE, APPARENTLY.

SO WHERE'S KAINE?

ON HIS WAY TO YOUR OFFICE? OKAY, FINE. I STILL HAVE THE PHONE NUMBERS OF SOME PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP.

JUST GET OUT OF THERE, GO CHECK INTO A HOTEL FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS, AND LEAVE THE REST TO ME.

THE KILL CREW. THEY WERE HANDY IN DEALING WITH A FEW OF MY CLONES WHO ESCAPED THE FACILITY

THEY'RE FAST. EFFICIENT.

...AND DEADLY

BUDDA BUDDA

BUDDA

BUDDA

BUDDA

BUDDA

YEAH, THIS EVENING'S GOING WELL.

VICTOR, THIS IS TANGO. WE'VE GOT HIM PINNED.

HE'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE.

SCRATCH THAT! HE'S MOVING!

HE'S WEBBED TOGETHER SOME SORT OF SHIELD!

PERFECT.

AND, FORTUNATELY FOR ME...

...THEIR BULLETS PROVIDED ME WITH AN *EXIT.*

BOY, THEY HAVE QUITE THE SECURITY DETAIL.

OKAY. BETTER HEAD BACK TO THE WAREHOUSE AND FREE--

PING

UH-OH.

THWIP

YOU SHOT THE WEBLINE INSTEAD OF HIM?

I MISSED.

SURE YOU DID, FOXTROT.

VICTOR. HE GOT AWAY.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, TANGO. HE'S PROBABLY COMING BACK HERE TO FREE THE DOC.

WHISKEY AND I WILL TAKE HIM WHEN HE DOES.

SO WHAT'S THE FIRST STEP IN CURING ABIGAIL?

AS I SAID, *RESEARCH.*

WE NEED A TOP GENETICIST. SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN WORKING ON CROOK'S DISEASE.

IF I CAN PUT MY HEAD TOGETHER WITH THEIRS, THEN WE CAN COME UP WITH A CURE.

WHO DID YOU HAVE IN MIND?

NO ONE AT THE MOMENT. THAT WILL BE THE FIRST STEP OF THE RESEARCH.

I NEED TO STUDY THE SITUATION, SEE WHO'S AVAILABLE AND WHERE THEY'RE LOCATED.

THEN I'LL FIND THEM AND BRING THEM HERE.

AND HOW WILL YOU CONVINCE THEM TO COME?

CASSANDRA, YOU'RE THE TOP BLACKMAILER IN THE WORLD.

I WOULD IMAGINE THAT YOU COULD PRETTY MUCH CONVINCE ANYONE TO DO *WHATEVER* YOU WANT THEM TO.

THAT MUCH IS TRUE.

SLATE.

SHIK

OW!

WHAT THE HELL, DUDE?!

THAT, PETER, WAS A TRACKING DEVICE.

WHAT, DID YOU THINK WE WOULD JUST LET YOU WALK OUT OF HERE UNATTENDED?

THAT DEVICE WILL INFORM US OF YOUR WHEREABOUTS WITHIN A HUNDRED-MILE RADIUS.

YEAH? AND WHAT HAPPENS IF I GO OUTSIDE OF THAT RADIUS?

IT WILL BLOW YOUR HEAD OFF.

OH. WELL...

OKAY, THEN.

NOW GET TO WORK.
BRING ME THE NAME OF A GENETICIST TO HELP YOU.
AND, PETER... IF ABIGAIL DIES BEFORE YOU CAN CURE HER--
YOU CAN TRIGGER THIS TO BLOW MY HEAD OFF PREMATURELY.
EXACTLY.
PLEASURE TO BE DOING BUSINESS WITH YOU.
OKAY, THEN.
GOOD TALK.
BLOW HIS HEAD OFF? THE TRACKER CAN'T DO THAT.
YES, BUT HE DOESN'T *KNOW* THAT, AND I DOUBT HE'LL BE WILLING TO CALL MY BLUFF.
OKAY, DIVA.

IT'S A BLUFF. IT HAS TO BE.

BUT WHAT IF IT'S NOT?

DAMN IT. AND WHAT'S TO PREVENT HER FROM BLOWING MY HEAD OFF AFTER I CURE HER DAUGHTER, JUST TO BE VINDICTIVE?

MAN, THIS EVENING IS SPIRALING RIGHT DOWN THE—

HUH!

AND JUST LIKE THAT, IT'S LOOKING UP.

IT'S MANDY.

SHE OWES ME FIFTY BUCKS!

SHE'S HEADING OUT

PERFECT

I WONDER IF SHE REMEMBERS ME

HI.

ACCCKKK!

HOW'S IT GOING, MANDY?

HAVE MY FIFTY DOLLARS YET?

N-NO. NOT YET.

I HOPE YOU WEREN'T GAMBLING IT AWAY IN THAT CASINO.

WHAT? NO, NOT AT ALL. I...I WAS...

YOU WERE WHAT?

APPLYING FOR A JOB.

REALLY?

YES.

WHAT KIND OF A JOB?

A DANCER IN THEIR SHOW.

HUNH. OKAY. SO YOU'RE A DANCER.

YOU AUDITION FOR A LOT OF SHOWS?

WELL... A FEW, YES. I HAD...

UHM... ARE THOSE FRIENDS OF YOURS?

FRIENDS? I DON'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS IN--

HOLY CRAP.

ARE YOU KIDDING?

WHO THE HELL ARE THOSE GUYS?!

AND WHY IS ONE OF THEM WEARING MY ORIGINAL *SCARLET SPIDER* OUTFIT?

LOOKS PRETTY GOOD, ACTUALLY. *REALLY* GOOD.

THEY'RE MAKING A BREAK FOR THE CASINO! THAT SPELLS TROUBLE.

ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING HOW SLATE TOOK CARE OF THOSE GOONS WHO INVADED THE PLACE EARLIER.

YOU REALLY THINK PETER CAUSED HER TO WAKE UP BEFORE?

I THINK THAT WE HOLD OFF ON KILLING HIM BEFORE WE FIND OUT FOR SURE. YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND, SLATE. YOU DON'T HAVE ANY CHILDREN...

YEAH, I DO.

YOU *DO?*

WHAT'S HIS--

I DON'T TALK ABOUT HIM.

PITY. IN THAT CASE, LET'S TALK ABOUT THE *SHOOTERS.*

YES. I DON'T ACCEPT THE NOTION THAT IT WAS JUST A RANDOM HIT.

THE GOONS WHO TRIED TO SHOOT UP THE CASINO?

YOU THINK SOMEONE EITHER ENCOURAGED THEM OR HIRED THEM.

I DO.

I WOULD LIKE YOU TO FIND THEM AND QUESTION THEM.

SHOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM. AFTER ALL, THE POLICE HAVE TO EARN THE MONEY WE PAY THEM.

MR. SLATE...

YEAH?

THERE'S A PROBLEM DOWNSTAIRS.

TWICE? IN LESS THAN 24 HOURS?

IT'S, UH, KIND OF DIFFERENT. THREE GUYS IN SPIDER-MAN COSTUMES.

OH, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD.

HOW SHOULD I HANDLE IT, DIVA?

SAVE ONE FOR QUESTIONING.

AND THE OTHER TWO?

"KILL THEM. IT WILL SEND A MESSAGE."

EVERYONE'S STARING AT US.

LET THEM. WE HAVE A JOB TO DO.

WEARLOOKING FRCASSNDER MERKEY!

ISDWE ARLOOKINGFR CASSNDER MERKEY!

WATSA MADDER WFU?

DUDE, WE'VE BEEN OVER THIS.

WUD?

YOU'VE GOT *CLOTH* OVER YOUR FACE. YOU HAVE TO SPEAK SLOWLY AND DISTINCTLY BECAUSE OTHERWISE NOBODY KNOWS WHAT YOU'RE TALKING AB--

OH, FOR GOD'S SAKE.

I SAID WE ARE LOOKING FOR CASSANDRA MERCURY! WE WANT TO SEE HER IMMED--

SHUT UP.

URKH!

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?

WE'RE THE *WEB SPINNERS.*

LET *FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD* GO OR YOU'RE GOING TO REGRET IT.

AND BRING US CASSANDRA MERCURY.

GLK!

WHY DO YOU WANT TO SEE HER?

SHE'S A CRIMINAL.

SHE'S A CASINO OWNER. WHO TOLD YOU SHE'S A CRIMINAL?

GLKK!

CONTACTS.

ANSWER OR HE'S DEAD.

WE'RE NOT AFRAID OF YOU.

KRAAAAK

OH MY GOD!

NOBODY SAW THAT, RIGHT?

$100,000.00

STAR LORDS

$ 75,000

MINNIE MOUSE

HE'S NEXT UNLESS YOU ANSWER.

I... I...

TELL HIM...

I DON'T KNOW! *HE* WAS OUR CONTACT! *HE* KNEW!

THAT'S TOO BAD FOR YOU, THEN.

FWIPPP

WHAT IS THAT? SILLY STRING?

UH... YEAH.

TOO BAD YOU DON'T HAVE ANYTHING STRONGER.

MAYBE *HE* DOESN'T...

...BUT *I* DO.

WAAAM

GET OUT. NOW...

SP- SPIDER- MAN! YOU--

NOW!

RIIP

HE SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO THAT. JUST RIP THAT WEBBING OFF.

WAAAM

OW

WAM WAM WAM WAM WAM

OW! OW! OW! OW! OW!

OOOOF!

WAAAAK

DON'T KNOW WHO YOU OR YOUR IDIOT FRIENDS ARE...

...BUT I'M *ENDING* YOU.

YOU'RE...

...ENDING *ME?*

YOU KILLED THAT KID! HE WAS HARMLESS! TERRIFIED!

AND YOU SNAPPED HIS NECK!

HE WAS AN INTRUDER. LIKE YOU. AND SOON IT'S GOING TO BE YOUR NECK.

NOT SOON. NOT EVER.

THIS IS WAR, BUDDY.

I'VE BEEN IN A FEW IN MY TIME.

SO HAVE I.

WELL THEN...

...LET THE BEST MAN WIN.

KRAAASH

HEY! I WAS JUST LOOKIN' FOR YOU!

I NEED MORE QUARTERS.

"OH MY GOD. OH MY GOD..."

WE GOTTA GO BACK FOR ANDY'S BODY--

ARE YOU NUTS?! WE'LL WIND UP NEXT TO HIM!

AND THAT GUY WHO SAVED US! WAS THAT *REALLY* SPIDER-MAN?!

NOPE. I'M THE SCARLET SPIDER.

JEEZ!

SO WHO ARE YOU GUYS AGAIN?

WE'RE... WE'RE MEMBERS OF ***THE WEB SPINNERS.*** WE'RE FANS OF... WELL, OF YOU! AND SPIDER-MAN AND HIS FRIENDS.

YEAH, I FIGURED THAT MUCH OUT.

THERE'S ABOUT HALF A DOZEN OF US. WE PATROL THE STREETS OF LAS VEGAS, SEARCHING FOR CRIME.

WE FIGURE IT'S WHAT SPIDER-MAN WOULD WANT.

YOU FIGURED WRONG.

YOU NEED TO STOP, OR YOU'LL END UP LIKE YOUR FRIEND BACK THERE.

AND... YOU'RE THE SCARLET SPIDER, YOU SAID? THE *REAL* ONE?

YEAH. WHY?

WELL, IT'S YOUR COSTUME, MAN. I MEAN, LOOK AT IT.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH IT?

WELL, FIRST OFF, THE COLORING IS A RIP-OFF OF SPIDERCIDE. AND I CAN SEE YOUR MOUTH.

IT'S JUST... IT'S ALL WRONG.

YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT? I JUST *SAVED* YOUR #$% AND NOW YOU'RE CRITIQUING MY *COSTUME*?!

KNOW WHAT? FINE. GIVE ME *YOURS*.

BUT IT'S MY--

NOW!

JERK

TO BE CONTINUED!

NEXT:

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BE SURE TO MARK IT OKAY TO PRINT!

SPIDER-MAN

PENANCE RELAX

#4 MARVEL

DAVID BAGLEY DELL KEITH

Years ago, Miles Warren, one of Peter Parker's college professors, stole a sample of Peter's genetic material and used it to create a perfect clone of Spider-Man. With all of Peter's memories, the clone fled. Created, not born, and without an identity of his own, he gave himself a new name and made his own way in the world as...

BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER

After a misguided stint as a villain, Ben's attempt to get back on his feet has led him to Las Vegas and into uneasy partnership with Cassandra Mercury, Casino owner and mother of one of Ben's NEW U patients.

Meanwhile, Kaine has been tracking Ben, hoping to bring him to justice for his crimes as the Jackal.

WRITER
PETER DAVID

PENCILER
MARK BAGLEY

INKS
JOHN DELL & ANDREW HENNESSY

COLOR ARTIST
JASON KEITH

LETTERER
VC'S JOE CARAMAGNA

COVER ARTISTS
MARK BAGLEY, JOHN DELL & JASON KEITH

ASSISTANT EDITOR
ALLISON STOCK

EDITOR
DEVIN LEWIS

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
NICK LOWE

EDITOR IN CHIEF
AXEL ALONSO

CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER
JOE QUESADA

PRESIDENT
DAN BUCKLEY

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
ALAN FINE

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RITA?

WHY SO SILENT, DR. CLARKSON?

UH-OH.

SHE'S GONE. ALL RIGHT. THIS HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE BAD.

CRAP. WHAT'S THAT FLASH OF--

KRAAASH!

--LIGHT?!

RIBBON

STAN'S WAREHOUSE

NICE SHOT.

YEAH, WELL, WITH AN NLAW, EVEN A NEAR MISS IS AS GOOD AS A HIT.

THINK WE GOT HIM?

NO WAY HE SURVIVED *THAT!* WE'RE GOOD TO GO.

BOO.

WAAAAM

OOOOF!

TARGET IS *LIVE!* REQUESTING BACKUP!

BLADAM BLADAM

UNHHH!

BLADADAM

NOW LISTEN CAREFULLY.

IF I SEE EITHER OF YOU AGAIN, I'LL END YOU.

NO WARNINGS. NO SCREWING AROUND. *DONE.*

DO WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER?

GET OFF MY HAND, YOU SON OF A--

KRADAAK

ARRRRRHHH!

I SAID, DO WE UN--

KRUNK

GOOD.

YES! YES! I UNDERSTAND! *I UNDERSTAND!*

SLATE. YOU'RE UP EARLY.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

LAS VEGAS POLICE

THAT GUY WHO DID THE SHOOTING AT THE CASINO. HIM AND HIS PAL. THEY'RE STILL HERE, RIGHT?

AS YOU "REQUESTED." SOMEONE TRIED TO SPRING THEM, BUT WE'VE GOT WAYS OF STALLING PEOPLE WHEN WE HAVE A MIND TO.

SOMEONE WHO?

NO IDEA. A REP OF A REP.

YOU WANT TO SEE HIM, I ASSUME. ALONE.

YOU COULD SAY THAT.

HE DIDN'T TELL US A THING. WE GRILLED HIM FOR A WHILE.

I HAVE A WAY WITH PEOPLE.

BY THE WAY, BLANCHER, YOU LEFT THESE CHIPS LAST TIME YOU CAME BY.

DID I?

HEH. I GUESS I MUST'VE.

CHARLIE!

YEAH?

ESCORT MR. SLATE TO HOLDING CELL B36, PLEASE. AND THEN WALK AWAY.

WALK AWAY?

YEAH.

OOOKAY.

WHO SENT YOU?

HMMM...?

MERCURY RISING. THE CASINO YOU SHOT UP. WHO SENT YOU?

OH. IT'S YOU.

DON'T MAKE ME ASK A THIRD TIME.

YEAH? AND WHAT'CHA GONNA DO ABOUT IT EXACTLY?

B36

YOU'RE OUT THERE AND I'M IN HERE.

WHO. SENT. YOU.

NOBODY. HAPPY?

NO.

KRAAANG

I'M NOT.

NOW ANSWER TRUTHFULLY, OR I WILL KILL YOU, RIP YOUR HEAD OFF, AND HEAD DOWN THE HALL TO SHOW IT TO YOUR FRIEND...

...WHO I SUSPECT WILL BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO KNOW.

KRAK

YAAARHHH!

WELL, THAT WAS AMUSING.

FIVE SECONDS TO TELL ME.

FOUR...

...THREE...

ALL RIGHT!

GOOD CHOICE.

THERE IT IS: *MERCURY RISING*. RESIDENCE OF CASSANDRA MERCURY. RICH AS CROESUS...

...AND THE WOMAN WHO HIRED REILLY TO CURE HER DAUGHTER, ABIGAIL.

IF BEN *DID* COME TO VEGAS, THIS WOULD'VE BEEN HIS FIRST STOP.

WHAT THE HELL IS *HE* DOING WALKING AROUND? HE THINKS HE CAN JUST COME AND GO AS HE PLEASES?

AMAZING. FIRST THING IN THE MORNING AND THE PLACE IS ALREADY JUMPING.

A COMBINED TESTAMENT TO THE ETERNAL AMERICAN DREAM...

...AND THE OBLIVIOUSNESS WITH WHICH PEOPLE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THEY CAN WIN FORTUNES IN A SYSTEM RIGGED AGAINST THEM.

UH... YES? CAN I HELP YOU?

I'M GOING TO SAY THIS ONCE AND ONLY ONCE.

THANK YOU.

FOR WHAT?

THE ROOM. WELL IT'S NOT JUST A ROOM. IT'S A *SUITE.*

BIGGER THAN MY APARTMENT WAS.

IT'S GORGEOUS. AND I KNOW *YOU'RE* RESPONSIBLE.

SO I JUST WANTED TO SAY THANK YOU.

YOU'RE, *UH*...YOU'RE WELCOME.

NOW GET OUT OF MY WAY.

UH, OKAY.

STAR BAR

WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS THAT AB--?

REILLY. SHE THINKS I'M REILLY.

OF COURSE. IT'S OBVIOUS.

AND HE'S PAYING FOR *HER ROOM?*

GOT TO FIND OUT IF SHE KNOWS WHERE HE IS...

WHERE DO YOU THINK *YOU'RE* GOING?

WHY THE HELL AREN'T YOU UPSTAIRS RESEARCHING?

I...

JUST... THOUGHT I'D WALK AROUND. STRETCH MY LEGS. GET SOME AIR.

YOUR LEGS LOOK STRETCHED ENOUGH TO ME.

COME ON. LET'S GET YOU BACK UPSTAIRS.

OF COURSE. ABSOLUTELY.

IS MS. MERCURY AROUND? I'D LIKE TO SPEAK WITH HER.

HAVE YOU CURED ABIGAIL?

NO. NOT YET.

THEN THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN SAY THAT WILL BE OF THE SLIGHTEST INTEREST TO HER.

I SUPPOSE NOT.

♫ UPSIDE INSIDE OUT! ♫

I THINK YOUR CELL PHONE IS RINGING.

I KNOW.

♫ SHE'LL PUSH AND PULL YOU DOWN! ♫

"LIVIN' LA VIDA LOCA"? REALLY?

SHUT UP.

THIS IS SLATE.

YEAH, DIVA. I'M IN THE BUILDING RIGHT NOW.

I'M ALREADY ON MY WAY. FOUND *PETER* SNOOPING AROUND THE LOBBY.

SO SINCE WE'LL BE SEEING HER ANYWAY...

YOU START A CONVERSATION WITH CASSANDRA MERCURY AND I'LL BREAK YOUR ARM. AND TRUST ME, IT WON'T BE THE FIRST BONE I'VE SHATTERED TODAY.

I WOULD IMAGINE.

IS "SLATE" YOUR *REAL* NAME?

WHY THE HELL DO YOU CARE?

JUST MAKING CONVERSATION. HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED FOR MS. MERCURY?

SHUT UP.

UNFFF...

OKAY.

DIVA?

YES, COME IN, SLATE.

GOOD MORNING, PETER.

MORNING.

ABBY, YOU REMEMBER PETER.

MOMMY SAYS YOU WOKE ME UP.

HOW--?

=KOFF= =AHEM=

HOW... ARE YOU THIS MORNING?

SAME AS USUAL.

YES, BUT WE'RE HOPING FOR IMPROVEMENT SOMETIME SOON.

I FIGURE LOTS OF PEOPLE PRAY TO GOD ALL THE TIME, BUT I'M HOPING THAT HE'S LISTENING REALLY CAREFULLY.

I'M SURE HE IS, HONEY. IN FACT, I'M POSITIVE.

RIGHT, PETER?

I'M PRAYING EVERY DAY.

RIGHT.

SHE'S A VERY SWEET CHILD.

OH, SHE'S THE BEST. SHE'S THE ONE THING IN THIS WORLD HER MOTHER LOVES. MAYBE EVER LOVED.

AND SHE'S DYING. SHE KNOWS IT. SHE'S NOT STUPID.

BUT SHE'S NOT AFRAID OF IT. NOT IN THE LEAST. INSTEAD, ALL SHE WORRIES ABOUT IS WHAT HER DEATH WILL DO TO HER MOTHER.

AND NOT WITHOUT REASON.

IF THAT CHILD DIES...

IT WILL NOT GO VERY WELL FOR SOME FOLKS.

YOU UNDERSTAND.

SURE.

SO GET IN THERE.

RIGHT. YES. ABSOLUTELY.

GOOD TALKING TO YOU.

YEAH. SURE.

WHAT THE HELL?

IS BEN *ACTUALLY* LIVING HERE AND TRYING TO *CURE* THAT GIRL? FOR *REAL?*

IT'S A SCAM. IT *HAS* TO BE A SCAM.

OF COURSE. CONVINCE HER THAT HE'S GOING TO REALLY CURE THE GIRL THIS TIME...

...THEN KILL HER AND REPLACE HER WITH ANOTHER CLONE. RAKE IN A HUGE PAYDAY.

THAT HAS TO BE IT.

DON'T KNOW WHERE HE IS AT THE MOMENT, BUT LET'S SEE WHAT HE'S BEEN UP TO.

DAMMIT. IT'S PASSWORD PROTECTED.

PARKER?

TAK TAK TAK

NO.

TAK TAK TAK

JACKAL?

TAK TAK

NO.

AUNTMAY? UNCLEBEN? BENPARKER? MAYPARKER? GWENSTACY? FORESTHILLS?

DAMMIT. NONE OF THEM ARE GETTING THROUGH. WHAT POSSIBLE--?

TAK TAK TAK

KAINE.

IT'S "KAINE."

K-A-I-N-E.

WHAT CAN I SAY? I'M A SUCKER FOR SENTIMENT.

YOU WANT SOME COFFEE? I CAN MAKE A FRESH POT.

EVERY TIME SHE DRIFTS OFF TO SLEEP, I WONDER IF SHE'S EVER GOING TO WAKE UP AGAIN.

IF I JUST WITNESSED HER LAST WAKING MOMENTS ON EARTH.

WHEN I DIE, GOD AND I ARE HAVING WORDS ABOUT THIS.

DON'T TAKE THIS THE WRONG WAY, DIVA, BUT DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU'LL WIND UP ON THE BIG GUY'S SIDE OF THE STREET?

IF NOT, I'M GOING TO WIND UP TAKING OVER HELL AND MAKE HIM COME DOWN TO FACE ME.

I HAVE NO DOUBT.

HOW DID THINGS GO AT THE POLICE STATION?

YOU WERE RIGHT. SOMEONE HIRED THE GUNMEN TO BUST IN HERE AND DO THE ROBBERY.

I KNEW IT. DO YOU HAVE A NAME FOR ME?

I DO, BUT YOU'RE NOT GONNA LIKE IT.

THAT GOES WITHOUT SAYING. BUT WHOEVER IT IS IS GOING TO LIKE IT EVEN LESS. SO WHO IS IT?

THORNE.

DAMMIT.

YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT ANY? IT'S REALLY GOOD.

NO?

FINE. MORE FOR ME.

SO YOU GOT PAST THE KILL CREW.

YES.

AND NOW YOU'VE COME FOR ME.

YES.

JUST GONNA KILL ME, ARE YOU?

YES.

CAN WE TAKE A MOMENT TO REMEMBER OUR ORIGINS? THE MAN WHOM WE'RE BOTH A CLONE OF?

DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT *PETER PARKER* WOULD JUST WALK IN AND ANNOUNCE HIS INTENT TO KILL SOMEBODY?

ESPECIALLY WHEN IT'S SOMEONE WHO HAD NO CRIMINAL INTENT, WHO SIMPLY DESIRED TO IMPROVE PEOPLES' LIVES BY GIVING THEM WHAT THEY WANTED?

THEIR MOST BELOVED FRIENDS, RELATIVES, WHATEVER.

THAT'S ALL I WANTED TO DO, KAINE. MAKE PEOPLE HAPPY.

TELL YOU WHAT: START THE COMPUTER UP. THERE'S AN OLD POWERPOINT PRESENT--

NYAAAARRHHH!

OOOOFF!

KRAAA

OKAY. KAINE'S CLEARLY PISSED.

WAM WAM

WAM

TIME FOR A DIFFERENT APPROACH.

KRUUUNCH

ARRRGHH!

WELL, AT LEAST THAT WORKED.

FWIIIZZZ

THE QUESTION IS NOW WHAT?

THE FIRST ANSWER IS OBVIOUS

NO JACKAL COSTUME?

I'M NOT THE JACKAL ANYMORE, KAINE. I'M THE *SCARLET SPIDER.*

NO, BEN.

I AM.

YOU WANNA GO?

FINE.

LET'S GO!

TO BE CONTINUED!

SCARLET LETTERS

Send e-mail to SPIDEYOFFICE@MARVEL.COM (please mark as "OKAY TO PRINT")
Letters c/o Spider-Office 135 West 50th Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10020

ALLISON STOCK
ASSISTANT EDITOR

DEVIN LEWIS
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

NICK LOWE
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

AXEL ALONSO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

JOE QUESADA
CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER

DAN BUCKLEY
PRESIDENT

ALAN FINE
EXEC. PRODUCER

Hello, CloneHeads! Spider-Office Associate Editor Devin Lewis reporting to you live and in print from Marvel HQ in the heart of New York!

As I type this, we're feverishly working away to make you the best comics mags in the biz, but we wanted to take a break from the business to answer some of your letters.

In the past couple of weeks, we've gotten a lot of fan mail from you readers out there in Mighty Marveldom about the return of Ben Reilly, the original Scarlet Spider!

What did you fans have to say? Words of praise?! Harsh criticisms?! READ ON AND FIND OUT, TRUE BELIEVER!

Just finished issue #2 of BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER. I love it so far. "The Clone Conspiracy" was an amazing story, and I was disappointed Prowler didn't last longer after it ended, but now seeing Ben Reilly's story is fascinating. The story is emotional and comedic at the same time! Keep up the good work!

Bill

Hi, Bill! Thanks for your letter, and thanks for reading! Always love hearing that fans are enjoying what we're doing in the pages of our funny books! Keep THWIPin'!

Hi Spider-Office,

I want to thank you for all your efforts in bringing Ben Reilly back into the Marvel fold. I am well aware he was such a contentious character for many people, but I wanted to share with you why he was so important to me in the 1990s, and my hopes for him going forward.

What fascinated me about Ben was that he was, for all intents and purposes, Spider-Man—the same powers, the same sense of responsibility, but in addition to this he had "none of the perks." He had to live his life in Peter's shadow and accept that the only reason he wasn't living Spidey's life was because the other guy literally got there first. I think that is something we all relate to—opportunities we've missed because somebody just like us has beaten us to the punch. The one who is the bridesmaid, but never the bride.

Ben's story arc as the Scarlet Spider for me was about how human beings move on from such a scenario. How we step out from the shadows, let go of the baggage of the past and craft ourselves into someone new—someone who is no longer defined solely by a role model or a forerunner... but a more complete, rounded individual who is doing what they do because they have claimed their life as their own.

Perhaps one of the things that really endeared me to Ben was his early encounter with Venom, where his spider-sense actually works because his cloning occurred before the symbiote bonded with Peter, and he's left wondering why Peter could ever let Venom roam free because it seems so wrong to him... and then demonstrates this by rejecting the advances of the symbiote after he separates it from Eddie.

It honestly didn't matter to me if Ben was real or clone, because that wasn't the point.

Looking back in hindsight, I think it's possible that pulling the Peter-Ben switch was an early plan to end the Spider-Marriage, but the fans didn't like it. However, I think you have an opportunity to please both sets of fans now... but more of that in a bit.

So, my hopes for the character. I've read both issues of the Ben Reilly run so far and have mixed feelings. This is *not* the Ben I remember and love...but I accept his story starts in a very difficult place for him. In essence, it is like he's on the same track as he was before, but has been pushed backwards millions of miles because of how he has been treated and it causing him to snap.

He's starting from much worse than scratch, not so much square one but square -9,957.

I've seen people go crazy and lose their minds over how a story starts and think, "This is the end. You've ruined the character. The sky is falling", as with the current Captain America arc. However, a story is a journey, and you don't know where you are going to end up from taking just two steps. So, I'm not one of those guys...I'll keep the faith, trust to hope and for now at least enjoy the ride.

Having seen him do it literally, I'd like Ben to rise from the ashes metaphorically. Take the painful steps to reclaim not just his sanity...but also his former identity. See him atone for what he has done and let go of some of the zany props (such as faux May). My hope is that the return to his old costume will, in some ways, be a semiotic indicator of this.

Going even further forward, you could even have Ben devlop feelings for MJ. Admittedly, this will either royally honk off Spider-Marriage fans or please them to no end. I'd probably fall into the latter category.

Anyway, keep up the good work...and I'll keep the faith. Come on, Ben...you can do it. We believe in you.

Nick P.
Alcester, United Kingdom

Hi, Nick! Thanks so much for your letter and for sticking with us for the first two issues, even if you've got some reservations about the story so far!

I'm a big Ben Reilly fan, too (as I'm sure you already know, being the ever-loyal Spider-Fan that you are!), and I'll be honest with you – few moments in comics have broken my heart as much as the entirety of Dan Slott and Giuseppe Camuncoli's epic AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #22, where we learned the awful fate that befell Ben after he sacrificed himself to save Peter from the Green Goblin. Few characters in comics have been put through the emotional wringer like Ben Reilly, and, yes, it pains me too to see Ben making what you or I might consider... morally dubious decisions, but what hurts more is that I can kind of understand why he's doing it.

Peter has some truly beautiful stories planned, and while I can't guarantee that Ben'll be a hero any time soon, I think what Peter is working toward is going to hit you right square in the feels.

SCARLET SPIDER #1 was excellent. I was a fan of Mark Bagley's art back when I read Spider-Man as a kid, so that alone was enough to get me to pick this book up, but the writing was awesome as well. I can't wait to see where this series is going. Keep up the good work.

Cody T

To the best writers on the planet,

The SCARLET SPIDER series is amazing. This is the most creative and hilarious first issue I ever read. Please make Aunt June a character in this entire series. I always loved Ben Reilly. My first Marvel bobble head was of Ben Reilly. I cannot wait for the second issue and I cannot wait for the new Scarlet Spider and Aunt June action figures. This series is one of my favorites. I will buy every issue, and tell all of my friends about it.

Tommy the Marvel Nerd

Only one writer you need to thank, Tommy, and that's industry legend PETER DAVID! Glad you're digging it so far!

I really love Scarlet Spider, and I'm excited to see him back to causing trouble, though I sometimes wonder where his original outfit with his hood came from or who designed him in such a way. So far, I've read the first comic and I'm already loving him thoroughly. Keep up the good work!!!

A. Bond

Hey, A.! Thanks for your letter. HERE'S A FUN PIECE OF MARVEL TRIVA! The Scarlet Spider costume was designed by none other than artist Tom Lyle, who also did a substantive run on the character's solo series...AND (!) we were even lucky enough to get him back on board to do a variant for BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER #1! Keep your eyes peeled—it just might be at your local shop, waiting for you to snatch it up!

That's it for this issue, True Believers! Join us next time, for the Scarlet Spider showdown of the century! DON'T MISS IT!

Over and out!
Devin
@edevinlewis

NEXT:

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MARVEL

BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER

#5

DAVID
BAGLEY
DELL
KEITH

Years ago, Miles Warren, one of Peter Parker's college professors, stole a sample of Peter's genetic material and used it to create a perfect clone of Spider-Man. With all of Peter's memories, the clone fled. Created, not born, and without an identity of his own, he gave himself a new name and made his own way in the world as...

BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER

After a misguided stint as a villain, Ben Reilly's attempt to get back on his feet has lead him to Las Vegas and into uneasy partnership with Cassandra Mercury, casino owner and mother of one of Ben's NEW U patients. Her daughter Abigail is dying of a seemingly incurable disease and Ben has offered to cure her in exchange for some perks that only a powerful casino magnate can provide.

However, Cassandra is having troubles of her own. Aside from her daughter being sick, her casino was recently attacked by hired gunmen. Her hired muscle, Slate, was able to trace the attack to a man named Thorne.

Meanwhile, Kaine Parker, another clone of Peter Parker, who has been trailing Ben since THE CLONE CONSPIRACY, has finally caught up with his prey...

WRITER
PETER DAVID

PENCILER
MARK BAGLEY

INKS
JOHN DELL

COLOR ARTIST
JASON KEITH

LETTERER
VC'S JOE CARAMAGNA

COVER ARTISTS
MARK BAGLEY, JOHN DELL & JASON KEITH

ASSISTANT EDITOR
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CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER
JOE QUESADA

PRESIDENT
DAN BUCKLEY

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
ALAN FINE

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ON THE SURFACE OF IT, KAINE AND I SHOULD BE EVENLY MATCHED, SINCE WE'RE BOTH CLONES OF PETER PARKER.

BUT IT'S REALLY *NOT* SO EVEN. KAINE TENDS TO OVERTHINK EVERYTHING. MAYBE BECAUSE HE DOESN'T HAVE SPIDER-SENSE.

HE MULLS. HE PLANS. HE STRATEGIZES. HE TRIES TO PREDICT WHAT'LL HAPPEN AND FIGURE OUT HOW HE'S GOING TO COUNTER IT.

ME? I *DEPEND* ON MY SPIDER-SENSE AND DO WHATEVER THE HELL I FEEL LIKE. SO I HAVE TO DETERMINE WHAT HE'S GOING TO THINK I'LL DO.

...AND DO THE *OPPOSITE*.

NO PROBLEM! I HOPE.

HEY!

OOFF!

THWIIIP

I *THOUGHT* YOU WOULDN'T HAVE THE GUTS FOR A FACE-TO-FACE ENCOUNTER.

THINK AGAIN!

WHAMM

KRAAAASH

IS THIS ANOTHER SHOW? I THINK THOSE ARE *CIRQUE* PEOPLE.

GOT TO MOVE QUICK. CAN'T GIVE HIM TIME TO THINK

WELL

CRAP

KRAAAASH

THERE'S NO NEED FOR US TO FIGHT!

THAT'S TRUE. YOU COULD JUST LET ME KILL YOU AND SAVE US BOTH SOME TIME.

SORRY. I'VE ALREADY DIED A FEW DOZEN TIMES.

THEN ONE MORE SHOULDN'T BE AN ISSUE!

NO ENTRANCE. DRESS REHEARSAL IN PROGRESS.

DON'T YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT I *SAW* WHEN I DIED? WHAT I EXPERIENCED IN THE AFTERLIFE?!

NOT REMOTELY.

OKAY, FINE! BE THAT WAY!

WE SHOULD BE FRIENDS, KAINE! WE SHOULD BE WORKING *TOGETHER!* WE COULD BE THE GREATEST TEAM IN THE *WORLD...*

...OR I COULD JUST BEAT THE LIVING SNOT OUT OF YOU.

EITHER WAY WORKS FOR ME.

YOUR CALL.

KRUNK

Y'KNOW, IF I WERE CHINESE, I DUNNO IF I'D BE FLATTERED OR INSULTED BY THIS PLACE.

WHENEVER DEALING WITH ANYTHING OF THORNE'S, ALWAYS ERR ON THE SIDE OF APPALLED.

FORBIDDEN CITY

UH-OH. MAIN FOYER. TARGET ALPHA JUST WALKED IN.

HAVE THEM ESCORTED OFF THE PREMISES IMMEDIATELY.

PLEASE LEAVE.

ARE YOU KIDDING ME?

NOW!

YOU REALIZE THAT NINJAS ARE JAPANESE, RIGHT? AND THIS PLACE IS MODELED ON CHINA.

IT'S PAN-ASIAN.

IT'S CALLED *THE FORBIDDEN CITY.* THAT'S IN CHINA. I KNOW. I'VE BEEN THERE. I'VE STUDIED THERE.

GREAT, FINE. LET'S GO.

WANT TO KNOW WHAT I STUDIED?

WHAT TH--?!

SELF-DEFENSE!

NOW ARE YOU GOING TO ESCORT US TO YOUR BOSS, OR ARE WE GOING TO HAVE TO CAUSE MORE PROBLEMS?

YAAAAAHHH!

GUESS THAT ANSWERS THAT.

NOW, MARTY, WHEN YOU GET KNOCKED OFF THE HORSE, I *REALLY* WANT YOU TO SELL IT. RIGHT NOW, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE ANTICIPATING THE BLOW.

WELL, I KIND OF AM.

YEAH, BUT YOU'RE THE ***BLACK KNIGHT.*** YOU SHOULDN'T BE EXPECTING TO GET KNOCKED ON YOUR BUTT.

I'M WONDERING: DO I HAVE TO BE THE BLACK KNIGHT? ISN'T THAT KIND OF CLICHÉ, THAT THE BLACK KNIGHT IS THE BAD GUY?

HE'S ALWAYS BEEN THE BAD GUY. FOR THE LAST EIGHTEEN YEARS.

RIGHT, SO WHY NOT SHAKE IT UP?

BECAUSE IT'S ***WORKED*** FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS.

BUT IT WON'T FOREVER! PEOPLE WILL GET SICK OF IT.

WHY NOT TRY THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX?

FEH. ***GREAT*** IDEA. WHY DON'T WE TOSS SOME ***SUPER HEROES*** INTO IT?

SHH!

MARTY--?!

HEY, YOU SAID IT! IT WASN'T ME!

YEAH. THIS IS GOING WELL.

SON OF A--

THANKS! NOW MY COSTUME'S GETTING ALL DIRTY.

I'LL HAVE TO STICK IT IN THE LAUNDRY. I HATE HAVING TO DO THE LAUNDRY.

HUNH. MAYBE I CAN SEND IT OUT FOR DRY CLEANING.

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH YOURS?

DO YOU *EVER* SHUT UP?

I CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO SUMMARIZE THE IRONY OF *YOU*, OF *ALL* PEOPLE, ASKING ME THAT.

YOU KNOW WHAT? IF WE'RE GONNA DO THIS...

...LET'S GO OLD SCHOOL!

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

IF NOTHING ELSE...

...IT MAKES IT EASIER TO TALK.

TALK? WHAT COULD WE *POSSIBLY* HAVE TO TALK ABOUT?

ABOUT WHY YOU SHOULDN'T KILL ME.

THERE'S LOTS OF REASONS. SO LET'S WHACK AT EACH OTHER WITH SWORDS WHILE WE DISCUSS...

...OR MAYBE, YOU KNOW, JUST GRAB A DRINK AND CHAT ABOUT IT INSTEAD?

KLAAANG

SO THAT'S A "NO"?

NEITHER OF US ARE GOING TO WIN, BRO. WE'RE TOO EVENLY MATCHED.

THWIIP

TRYING TO SNAG THIS THING OUTTA MY GRASP? C'MON, THE ANGLE IS ALL WRO--

AAAGH!

URKKKH!

NOT SO CHATTY NOW.

OKAY. WASN'T EXPECTING THAT.

DIDN'T THINK YOU'D DIE LIKE THIS, DID YOU?

IF IT'S ANY CONSOLATION, THIS WILL BE YOUR *LAST* DEATH.

NO COMING BACK THIS TIME, BEN.

GLK!

THIS TIME...

...YOU DIE.

WHUNK

OOFF!

NOBODY IS KILLING ANYBODY!

YOU... IDIOT! OF ALL THE--

WAAAM

KRUUNK

NOW JUST STAND DOWN, BOTH OF YOU! DON'T MAKE ME--!

SHUT UP.

KRAK

THIS HAS BEEN GREAT, KAINE! WE SHOULD DO IT MORE OFTEN!

BUH-BYE!

OH, NO. HE'S NOT GETTING AWAY THAT EASILY.

THIS ENDS NOW. I KNOW *EXACTLY* WHAT HE'S GOING TO DO...

HE'S GOING TO GO UNDERGROUND. BURY HIMSELF SOMEWHERE AND HOPE HE CAN AVOID ME.

BUT THAT'S AN EMPTY HOPE. THERE'S NO WAY THAT--

HUNH.

THE MOB MUSEUM

OF ORGANIZED CRIME AND P

ORRRR MAYBE NOT...?

THE MOB MUSEUM. COULD BE A TRICK TO DELAY ME.

BUT I DON'T THINK SO. I THINK HE'D APPRECIATE THE APPROPRIATENESS.

AFTER ALL, HE'S A *CRIMINAL*. WHAT BETTER PLACE FOR A CRIMINAL TO DIE?

I LOVE WATCHING YOU WORK.

LET'S GO.

RIGHT BEHIND YOU.

THORNE!

WUUNK

MORNING, CASSANDRA.

IT'S BEEN TOO LONG.

WIRETAPPING

GOOD THING THEY'RE NOT OPEN YET. HATE TO HAVE TO DO THIS WITH CUSTOMERS ALL AROUND.

DO WHAT, KAINE? THROW AWAY THE FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF THE MAN WE'RE *SUPPOSED TO BE?*

WE *BOTH* THREW THOSE AWAY A LONG TIME AGO.

YOU'RE AN AMAZING PIECE OF WORK, KAINE. YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT YOU ARE!

SCARFACE AL CAPONE

YOU'RE EVERYTHING THAT I WAS TRYING TO *ACHIEVE!* A NON-DEGENERATING CLONE.

A *HERO!*

WELL, NON-DEGENERATING *ANYMORE.*

AND TRYING TO *KILL* ME...

THWIP

THWIP

BUT THE TRUTH IS, I ENVY YOU! SIMPLY BY EXISTING, YOU PROVE THE VALIDITY OF MY WORK!

YOU'RE MY *WHITE WHALE,* KAINE! PART OF ME WANTS TO DISSECT YOU...

...BUT THE REST OF ME WANTS TO BE YOUR FRIEND!

ALL OF YOU SHOULD WANT TO KILL ME. BECAUSE I'M GOING TO KILL *YOU* FOR WHAT YOU DID AS THE JACKAL!

KILL ME FOR TRYING TO *HELP* PEOPLE? IS THAT WHAT THIS HAS COME TO?

YOU JUST WANTED TO HELP YOUR OWN TWISTED EGO!

YOU *KNOW* THAT'S NOT TRUE.

DID YOU REALLY THINK I COULDN'T DODGE THAT?

NO, I WAS *EXPECTING* YOU TO DODGE IT. I EVEN KNEW WHICH WAY YOU'D DODGE.

LOOK DOWN.

NICE BIG PILE OF WEBBING. EVEN YOU AND I CAN'T BREAK IT.

SO YOU WON'T HAVE A CHANCE TO LOOK AROUND. BUT THAT'S OKAY.

I BROUGHT SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU.

MIKE MALONE'S GUN. MALONE WAS A FEDERAL AGENT. HELPED BRING DOWN AL CAPONE, ALTHOUGH ELIOT NESS GOT ALL THE CREDIT.

YOU'RE POINTING AN EMPTY GUN AT ME. SO WH--?

BANG

THEY *ALSO* HAD *AMMO* ON DISPLAY. WASN'T HARD TO LOAD.

SO YOU SHOOT ME? THAT'S HOW THIS ENDS?

NO. I EXPECT IT'LL END WITH *YOU* SHOOTING *ME*. TAKE IT.

BUT *FIRST*, I WANT YOU TO LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY. I'M HOPING THAT SOMEWHERE INSIDE THAT STUBBORN HEAD OF YOURS IS A GOOD AND DECENT GUY WHO'S WILLING TO AT LEAST--

BAANG

ARGHHHH!

SON OF A--!

MAN, I WASN'T EVEN SURE I *COULD* CATCH A BULLET. LEAVE IT TO *YOU* TO TEST ME.

SO, WHAT? YOU KILL ME NOW? SOMEONE BEGGING YOU TO LISTEN TO HIM? YEAH, I'M SURE PETER WOULD BE SO FREAKING PROUD OF YOU.

UNCLE BEN, TOO.

FINE. JUST DO IT. BECAUSE I'LL BE DAMNED IF I BEG.

...

FINE.

SAY WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY.

YOU KNOW ABOUT CASSANDRA'S DAUGHTER.

ABIGAIL. SHE'S DYING. YOU'RE PRETENDING TO CURE HER.

NOT PRETENDING. I'M *REALLY* RESEARCHING A CURE. AND IF YOU KILL *ME*...

...YOU'RE KILLING THE *ONLY* PERSON WHO CAN HELP HER. SHOOT ME, AND YOU KILL AN INNOCENT GIRL.

BUT IF YOU'RE OKAY WITH THAT, THEN PULL THE TRIGGER.

YOUR CALL.

THE MOMENT YOU CURE HER, YOU'RE *DEAD*. FOR THAT MATTER, IF SHE *DIES*, I'LL KILL YOU.

YEAH, WELL, YOU'LL HAVE TO GET IN LINE.

YOU'VE TARGETED MY CASINO.

BOOMER TOLD YOU, I ASSUME. NICE WORK, ARRANGING FOR HIM TO REMAIN IN CUSTODY SO THAT YOU COULD QUESTION HIM.

WHY THE HELL ARE YOU DOING IT?

BECAUSE I WANT TO BRING IT DOWN I WANT TO CONVINCE TOURISTS IT'S FAR TOO DANGEROUS A PLACE TO GO AND GAMBLE AT.

AND REALLY, AM I ***WRONG?*** TWO SPIDER-MEN HAVE BEEN SPOTTED ON YOUR PROPERTY! NOT TO MENTION THE BULLETPROOF NEANDERTHAL STANDING TO YOUR LEFT.

I HAVE OTHER PLANS FOR YOU, AS WELL. ***MY OWN*** RESOURCES WHO CAN PUMMEL YOU ***AND*** YOUR BELOVED SLATE INTO ***NON-EXISTENCE.***

IF YOU ENGAGE IN A WAR WITH ME, YOU'RE GOING TO LOSE.

NO. IF IT COMES TO A FULL BATTLE...YOU WILL DIE. I'D MISS YOU, BUT I CAN LIVE WITHOUT YOU.

OH. ONE OTHER THING...

WHAT?

CALL MOM, WOULD YOU? I'M TIRED OF HER COMPLAINING TO ME ABOUT YOU.

SHUT UP.

TO BE CONTINUED!

SCARLET LETTERS

Send e-mail to SPIDEYOFFICE@MARVEL.COM (please mark "OKAY TO PRINT")
Letters c/o Spider-Office, 135 West 50th Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10020

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ASSISTANT EDITOR

DEVIN LEWIS
EDITOR

NICK LOWE
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

AXEL ALONSO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

JOE QUESADA
CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER

DAN BUCKLEY
PRESIDENT

ALAN FINE
EXEC. PRODUCER

Hello, Cloneheads! Editor Devin Lewis reporting to you live and in print from Marvel HQ in New York City!

WHAT AN ISSUE! Just when you thought Ben Reilly's life might be getting a smidge easier as he's reached a détente with Kaine, more trouble's already brewing with Cassandra Mercury! What does Thorne have up his sleeve? Will Ben be able to save Abigail? And if he can't, will Kaine make good on his promise to kill your favorite hooded hero?

Answers to those questions, and more you didn't even know you had, will be revealed in the next few issues, True Believers! So don't miss a single page!

ITEM: You may have heard about it online, but just this week, the House of Ideas announced MARVEL LEGACY, a bombastic initiative focused on telling tales in the classic Mighty Marvel Manner – and BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER will be taking part! We've released this image, featuring none other than THE SLINGERS! If you don't know who the Slingers are, what're you waiting for?! Log onto Marvel Digital Comics Unlimited and catch up! And, if you're a longtime Spider-Phile, don't worry – we've still got some surprises in store for you.

All right – enough plugging! Let's get to your letters.

Hello!

I grew up reading Ben Reilly's adventures in the '90s. It has been a nice pleasure to read the actual series, as Ben tries to find his way in the world after difficult times.

I am also a Peter David fan, hope to see a SCARLET SPIDER/SPIDER-MAN 2099 crossover soon!

Greetings from Brazil!
Rodrigo B.

Thanks for reading, Rodrigo! Great minds think alike, I guess, because when we were building BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER, Peter's work on SPIDER-MAN 2099 immediately jumped to mind and we toyed with the idea of doing a crossover. Unfortunately, the conclusion to Peter's epic SPIDER-MAN 2099 run was already in development (and it's on sale now, so go pick it up!). We just weren't able to line things up this time. But maybe in the future...?

I'm a huge Spider-Man fan! HUGE!!! And I've always loved the Scarlet Spider. I've never actually bought a comic before, though, until now... The new SCARLET SPIDER series is amazing and I can't wait for the rest of the series to come out!

An avid Spidey Fan,
Daniel

Glad you're digging it, Daniel!

Dear Spidey-Team,

To be completely honest, when I picked up BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER #1, I didn't have any real intentions of actually becoming invested in the series and had only bought it for the sake of having a number one. But after reading issues #2 and #3, it has become apparent that I had to add it to my monthly list!

I'm really starting to enjoy Ben Reilly as a spider again after the events of THE CLONE CONSPIRACY! I wasn't sure if this was intended, but there are a lot of similarities between The Scarlet Spider and Deadpool that bring a certain comedy aspect to the series! All I know is that I am one Spider-Man fan that is satisfied! Keep up the great work!

Anthony B.
Mesa, AZ

Thanks for reading, Anthony! Can't wait to see what we put Ben through next!

First time I've really been into a comic series for several years. I tried to get into the run with Kaine as the Scarlet Spider, but it just never fit the mold for me. Ben Reilly as a character was immediately one of my favorites growing up and it crushed my childhood self when he was killed off. So many story arcs ended with that one panel.

I'm really enjoying the direction you're taking Ben, out of the ashes of the Jackal with Kaine on his tail again. It's old and new at the same time, and I think you've done a great job in making him a more distinct and standalone character in just three issues.

Keep up the good work, looking forward to a long run!

Thanks
Nick

HEY, WAIT A SEC! NICK?! You're supposed to be editing the Spidey books, not sending fan mail to 'em! BACK TO YOUR TYPEWRITER, LOWE!

I'm sorry. Allison's just informed me that you're NOT Spider-Office Executive Editor Nick Lowe. Should've known, what since you were using complete sentences and all!

Thanks for reading!

When I came I to my local comic shop and saw Issues #1 and #2 of the new Scarlet Spider series, I immediately grabbed both of them and anxiously drove home to read them. The first issue was fantastic! The second issue as well! I am hooked for sure! Can't wait for more!

Vince E.

P.S. I've never liked a title so much I actually wrote in about it! Great job!

AH! This is great – always love working on comics that inspire people to drop a line to the Mighty Marvel Mailbag for the first time! Thrilled you like the story enough to write in, Vince!

Wow! The fans changed the Spider Universe... I also like the original Scarlet Spider's outfit. It's cool how it was done at the end of issue #3. I remember when he found the complete hooded sweatshirt on display way, way back in the day. I think it would be cool and also informative if you guys added something like a "Facts" page or even just a small column at the end of the new issues. Spidey-Fact #1, for example, could be that Ben found the blue spider hoodie in a window display. Something like that. I think it's a good idea but I will leave it to the pros to decide. Thanks, guys, and I hope this comic "sticks" around for a long time.

Webbing on the word "sticks."

David L.

Hey, David! Thanks for your letter. I was actually just thinking about this myself. We typically use these final pages of our issues for letter columns or next issue pages, but I've been debating the idea of using them for something new. Maybe some sketches or other in-progress work from our artists – perhaps even with a spot for them to field questions from you, the Mighty Marvel readership? WHAT SAY YOU, CLONEHEADS?! Would you like to get a peek behind the scenes and have your questions heard?

I never truly believed in a "win-win" situation until I read the last page of BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER ISSUE #3! Way to go, Peter David!

John B.

Don't know what John's referring to, readers? Go pick up BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER #3!

Hello,

I really enjoyed these first issues of this new SCARLET SPIDER series. I've been a fan of Ben Reilly for some time, though I find the change from an upbeat, inventive hero to a sociopathic, self-enabling nutcase jarring, though it's a change I'm interested in seeing to the end.

Also you're just nailing Kaine's character and I'm digging Ben's new costume, hate to see it go. Keep up the good work, have my fingers crossed for a successful run.

Sincerely,
Andrew A.

Thanks for your letter, Andrew! Glad you're digging the book and are sticking with us. I'm the biggest Ben Reilly fan EVER, so, believe me, I know exactly where you're coming from. A perk of working here at the House of Ideas is that we get to hear the stories the writers are cooking up long before they hit the stands, and I'm not afraid to admit that when Dan Slott laid out his plans to bring Ben back, I was skeptical. For a long, LONG time, I was firmly in the camp that Ben should stay dead, but after getting to see Dan and Jim Cheung's epic story – THE CLONE CONSPIRACY – come together, all of my fears were put to rest. I'm just glad that we were able to keep Ben's story and explore the next chapter of his tale with Peter and Mark.

And, hey, if you missed it, be sure to go pick up THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #22! It tells the story of just how Ben got so traumatized and it's one of the must gut-wrenching stories I've ever read – regardless of how much I love Ben!

All right, web-heads! That's all the space we've got for this issue. Be back here in ONE MONTH for BEN REILLY: THE SCARLET SPIDER #6!

Over and out!
Devin
@edevinlewis

NEXT:

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Adi Granov

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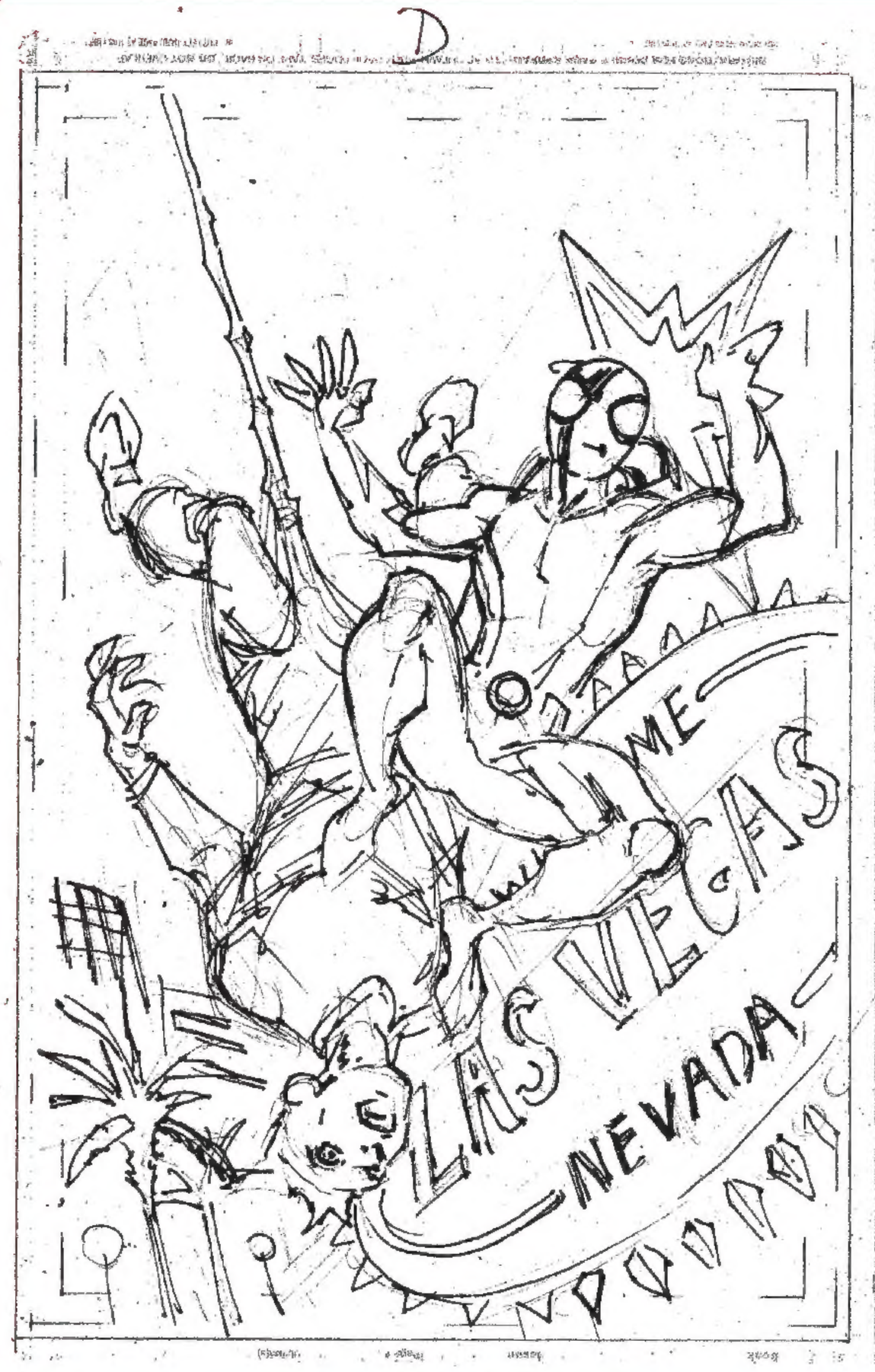
Mark Bagley

COVER SKETCHES

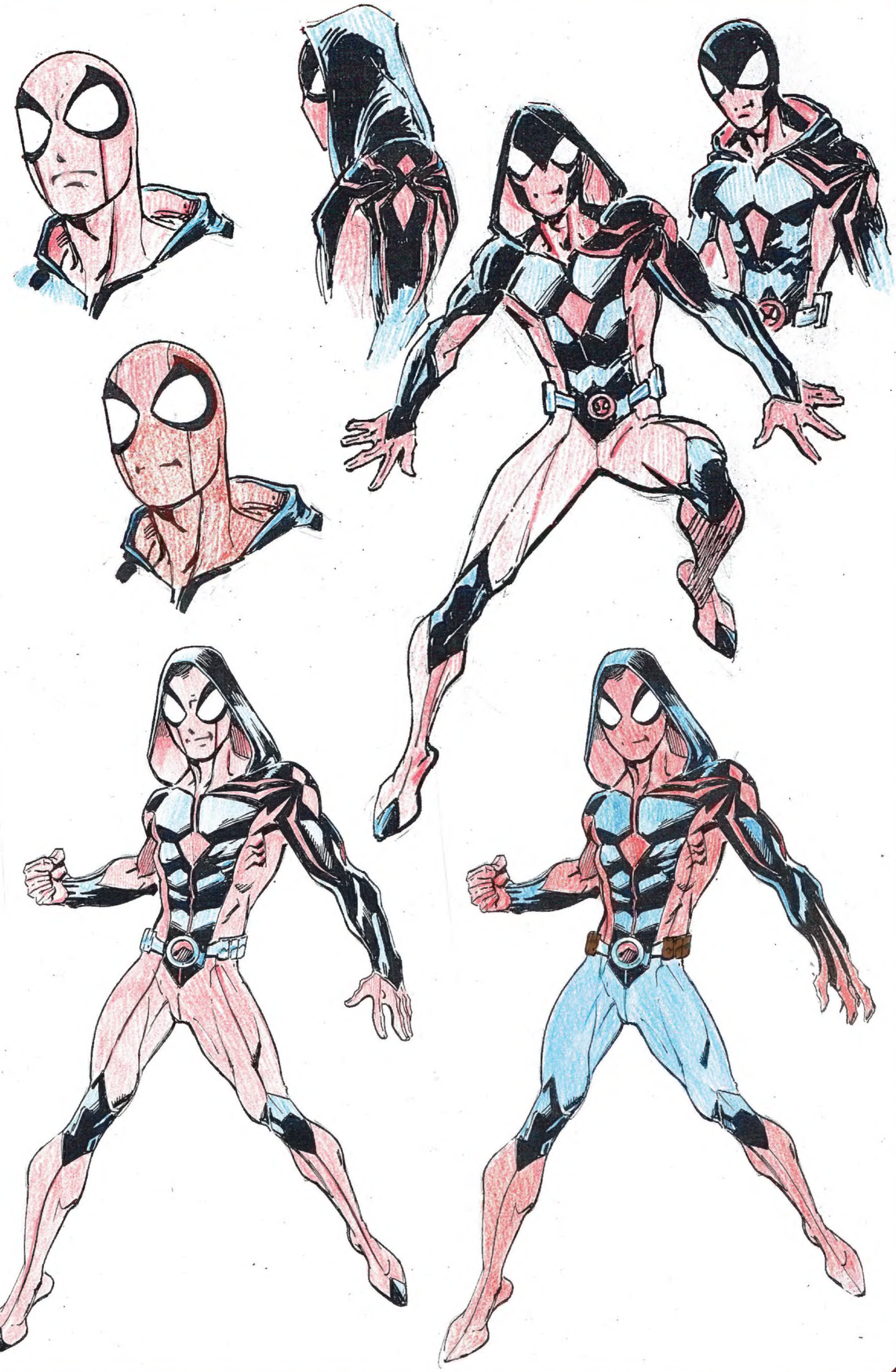


Tom Lyle

VARIANT COVER SKETCHES

Mark Bagley

CHARACTER SKETCHES



Mark Bagley

CHARACTER SKETCH

"It's hard to see how any '90s kid or Spider-fan could not love this book." – AiPT!

MARVEL

ONE OF THE MOST

CONTROVERSIAL CHARACTERS

IN COMIC-BOOK HISTORY RETURNS!

YOU ALL REMEMBER BEN REILLY – Spider-Man's clone, created by the Jackal, who returned years later to turn Peter Parker's life upside down! Ben became the Scarlet Spider and even took Peter's place as Spider-Man for a time, before dying a hero's death. Now, in the aftermath of the Clone Conspiracy, Ben Reilly is back! But he's not the same Scarlet Spider he was before. Sure, he may be putting on the classic threads, but he's madder than ever – and at odds with a deeply connected casino owner and her bruiser of a bodyguard. But they're not the only ones who have it in for him – because where Ben goes, can Kaine be far behind?

COLLECTING ***BEN REILLY: SCARLET SPIDER #1-5*** AND MATERIAL FROM ***CLONE CONSPIRACY: OMEGA #1*** – BY PETER DAVID, MARK BAGLEY, JOHN DELL AND JASON KEITH.

T+

JASON!